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**A Contribution to the Bioethicisation of Paulo Freire’s Philosophy of Education**

**Abstract**

*The paper attempts to point out Paulo Freire’s thoughts that could be fruitful in the context of bioethical consideration of the human relationship toward nature, i.e., non-human living beings, especially with regard to the development of bioethical sensibility, in particular present in children. Given that certain childhood traits, compatible with the idea of bioethical sensibility, form the core of Freire’s philosophy of education, this is an area in which the bioethicisation of Freire’s thought can be particularly fruitful. In addition, the paper presents his views associated with moral regard toward non-human living beings, as well as those that are somewhat contradictory to due regard toward living beings, given that the latter views provide impoverished insights into the richness of the non-human living beings’ self-realisation. Prior to these considerations, the notion of bioethicisation of philosophy is further clarified, especially regarding the closely related (programmatically) notion of Europeanisation of bioethics. Both of these terms are used in the context of integrative bioethics. The last chapter explains the potential contribution of Freire’s dialogical method to the development of a pluri-perspective methodology of integrative bioethics.*

**Keywords**

Paulo Freire, bioethicisation of philosophy, philosophy of education, oppression, humanisation, non-human living beings, childhood, integrative bioethics, pluri-perspectivism

**Introduction**

The emancipatory thought of Paulo Freire (1921–1997) is not aimed at acquiring skills in order to cope with the given order of things. It is first and foremost aimed at building a free person who should transform the given reality. However, Freire does not wait for the liberation of individuals as a precondition of transforming the world but demands direct intervention in the world, without which the thought cannot develop in an emancipatory direction. Nevertheless, this cannot be done without dialogue. Thus, liberating thought and action cannot perform separately from each other, as well as separately from other people.

One may find that nature and non-human living beings do not find their place in the “equation” of these relations between individuals, society, and the world. Or, at least, Freire’s formal “blueprint” of liberation cannot be in any sense instructive for changing the prevailing contemporary attitudes toward non-human living beings. However, both assumptions would be wrong or at least not completely true. The aim of the paper is to show that Freire’s thought can be instructive for bioethical considerations, primarily, of course, in the educational realm. It will be shown starting from the main elements of Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed, which can be outlined through the issues of oppression and humanisation. I will proceed by referring to Freire’s reflections on the world of childhood, due to the thesis that exercising childlike features

constitutes an indispensable component of education. An intense sensitivity to nature, i.e. bioethical sensitivity, is one of the characteristics that can certainly be associated with childhood. I will also analyse the way in which Freire's emphasis on dialogue on every level of the educational process can be helpful for rethinking pluri-perspectivity as the methodology of integrative bioethics. However, before I proceed, it is necessary to determine the concept of *bioethicisation*, as a contribution to the bioethicisation of Freire's thought is essentially the aim of the paper.

## Bioethicisation and Philosophisation

Being one of the aims of integrative bioethics, the *bioethicisation of philosophy* is explained by Hrvoje Jurić as

“... a bioethical reading of particular important authors and works of the Eurocontinental philosophical tradition in order to find footholds for establishing and developing dialogue between bioethics and philosophy, and incentives for their common reflection of bioethical issues.”<sup>1</sup>

This task goes along with the *philosophisation of bioethics* or philosophical deepening of bioethical issues. In the context of the construction of integrative bioethics, it was also understood as the *Europeanisation of bioethics*,<sup>2</sup> i.e., as

“... activating the potential of the Eurocontinental ethical, i.e., philosophical thought in bioethical frameworks, so that bioethics could follow its original intention which cannot be realised exclusively by means of the approach based on the reduced understanding of bioethics in the sense of issues and topics (biomedical or medical ethics, clinical bioethics) or disciplines and methodology (practical or applied ethics).”<sup>3</sup>

Obviously, the bioethicisation of philosophy and philosophisation of bioethics are two sides of the same coin. In order to make a philosophically more profound bioethical account, one should not consult only the authors and examine the topics dealing directly with a moral consideration of life but examine a whole range of related philosophical (and not only philosophical) issues, not without consulting (at least) the important philosophical authors, and not without the bioethicisation of philosophy.

Concerning the Europeanisation of bioethics in the context of those “sides of the same coin”, the aim of this paper, namely to contribute to the bioethicisation of the thought of Paulo Freire, Brazilian philosopher and educator, seems to have failed at the very outset if one isolates only *Europe* and *Brazil*. However, the goal of this Europeanisation should not be understood as securing the privileged position to “Eurocontinental” philosophy over other perspectives in the dialogue of integrative bioethics. It is, in fact, a programmatic concept created in the specific circumstances of neglecting this philosophical heritage in bioethics in favour of the Anglo-American orientation in bioethics, which treated this discipline simply as applied and practical ethics.<sup>4</sup> Thus, in no way is the Europeanisation intended to renounce the inclusiveness that the pluri-perspective methodology of integrative bioethics implies.<sup>5</sup> However, it should be noted that Jurić's definition of the bioethicisation of philosophy excludes those which are not Eurocontinental, which is, I believe, unintentionally done in the above-mentioned context.

But even if the Europeanisation were not a task in the mentioned context but an indispensable component of an integrative bioethical approach, Freire's philosophy would certainly fit in the Eurocontinental rather than the analytical

or other philosophical traditions. As for himself, Freire says, according to Moacir Gadotti, that he is

“... a man markedly influenced by contemporary European thought, but in the Latin American historical context.”<sup>6</sup>

Of course, his philosophy would be no less valuable for integrative bioethics as one of the perspectives if it were distinctively Latin American or, say, Indian in its basic orientation. Freire, after all, is not inspired solely by Eurocontinental philosophy. If one follows Walter Omar Kohan's informative review (which also draws on the reviews of other authors, and thus includes various interpretations), Freire's thought is influenced, e.g., by Latin American liberation theology or by Anglo-American progressive pedagogy and the pragmatism of John Dewey. It is also impossible to ignore the similarities between his and Socrates' pedagogical approaches. Other influences include existentialism, phenomenology, personalism, and, above all, Marxism, though by no means dogmatic.<sup>7</sup> The reason for a non-dogmatic stance can primarily be found in the fact that “Freire inscribes himself within these traditions which consider philosophy to be explicitly committed to the transformation of the status quo”.<sup>8</sup> While Marxism surely is such a philosophy, any kind of dogmatism is a betrayal of transformative motivation.

I have already referred elsewhere to some fruitful elements of Marxism for the development of bioethics.<sup>9</sup> To point out the overlap of the elements I detected there with those of Freire's philosophy of education would not be enough to devote a special paper to it. At first glance, it is actually difficult to see of what

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Hrvoje Jurić, *Etika odgovornosti Hansa Jonasa* [*Hans Jonas' Ethics of Responsibility*], Pergamena, Zagreb 2010, p. 254.

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Cf. *ibid.*

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*Ibid.*

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“The intention of the philosophisation of bioethics is different in principle from the intention of the so-called applied or practical ethics, which arises and develops primarily from the perspective of Anglo-American philosophy.” – *Ibid.*

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Cf. Igor Eterović, *Kant i bioetika* [*Kant and Bioethics*], Pergamena – Centar za integrativnu bioetiku Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Zagreb 2017, p. 80. Eterović also points out that the potentials of the Eurocontinental thought heritage should not only enrich bioethical considerations but also encourage reflection on the nature and reach of bioethics. By this “we can evade the pitfalls that certain bioethicists have fallen into by striving only to *mechanically fill up* already given models with European content, instead of trying to *reflect* the content in a European way and thus bring about a new quality to the

discussion on the nature of bioethics and its reach. Here, of course, I think of the *European principlism* project, the main bearers and promoters of which were Peter Kemp and Jacob Dahl Rendtorff”. – *Ibid.*

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Moacir Gadotti, *Reading Paulo Freire. His Life and Work*, trans. John Milton, State University of New York Press, Albany 1994, p. 140.

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Cf. Walter Omar Kohan, *Paulo Freire. A Philosophical Biography*, Bloomsbury, London 2021, pp. 19–21, 35. See also: Robert Lake, Tricia Kress (eds.), *Paulo Freire's Intellectual Roots. Toward Historicity in Praxis*, Bloomsbury, New York – London 2013.

8

W. O. Kohan, *Paulo Freire*, p. 23.

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See: Josip Guć, *Poticaži za bioetičko promišljanje odnosa kulture i prirode u djelu Nikole Viskovića* [*Incentives for the Bioethical Consideration of Relationship Between Culture and Nature in Nikola Visković's Work*] (dissertation), Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Zagreb 2021, pp. 216–228, doi: <https://doi.org/10.17234/diss.2021.8879>.

use Freire could be to bioethics, i.e., how his thought could be bioethicised. Before I try to dismiss this assumption, I will shortly present an overview of his educational thought.

## Oppression and Humanisation

The most influential of Freire's works, and also the most exemplary of his philosophy of education, is the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. At its very beginning, Freire points out the central term of pedagogy of the oppressed – *conscientisation* (Port. *conscientização*). The term simply refers to understanding and acting against the oppressive elements of reality. In order to change reality, one must radically understand it. However, this cannot be done from one direction, only in one's "head". Thought and action should emerge at the same time here. The more people understand they change the "objective (social) facts", the more they are able to intellectually and practically engage in reality. In this way, as it is pointed out by György Lukács, they are "consciously activating the subsequent development of their experiences". It is also the only way for persons to be responsible Subjects in the historical process and thus to search for their self-affirmation.<sup>10</sup> Oppression takes place from the moment one thwarts someone's "pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible subject, exactly because it interferes with the individual's ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human".<sup>11</sup>

"To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity. But the struggle to be more fully human has already begun in the authentic struggle to transform the situation. Although the situation of oppression is a dehumanised and dehumanizing totality affecting both the oppressors and those whom they oppress, it is the latter who must, from their stifled humanity, wage for both the struggle for a fuller humanity; the oppressor, who is himself dehumanised because he dehumanises others, is unable to lead this struggle."<sup>12</sup>

Humanisation is, therefore, the final goal of *conscientisation*, i.e., of the pedagogy of the oppressed – which can only be led by the oppressed in order to liberate (humanise) themselves and to enable liberation (humanisation) of their oppressors. However, Freire emphasises that liberation cannot be bestowed by either educators or revolutionary leaders. Liberation can only be happening (in the *process of achieving*) by one's own effort, and not individually but in the community, through dialogue. The latter, which must be conducted with the oppressed on every level of their emancipation, presupposes action.<sup>13</sup> This dialogue leads to a relationship in which a teacher is at the same time a student, just as the student is at the same time a teacher.

"Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers *and* students."<sup>14</sup>

However, as Freire also says, this does not mean that students and teachers should be placed on the same footing professionally but only that their relationship ought to be democratic. If they were identical (or reduced to each other), the dialogue would be meaningless. The dialogue does not occur in the case of the "spontaneism", imposed by students' random or mindless chatter, or in the case of the authoritarianism of the teacher.<sup>15</sup> Their mutual becoming of both teachers and students respectively should be a dialectical process.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, a teacher entering the educational endeavour should have certain knowledge, but this knowledge, as Freire concludes together with Antonio

Faundez, should primarily consist in the art of questioning, of putting forward or proposing ideas. Of course, this should also be done in two directions – the teacher should be able to encourage the cultivation of the art of questioning in their students. One should enter the search for the answers only after one had asked the questions, i.e., the teacher should not answer the questions before they had been asked. The questioning, of course, should also be linked with action. The repression over the questioning can be observed in the context of the repression of the whole person and their relationship to and in the world.<sup>17</sup> This is how the *banking concept of education* functions, in which education is considered “an act of depositing, in which students are the depositories, and the teacher is the depositor”, where “the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits”.<sup>18</sup> Diverse modes of a young person’s relation to the world are therefore vanishing on behalf of the depositor’s “objective (social) facts”, making changes of the latter harder and possibilities of activating the becoming of the student in a teacher impossible.

“It is not surprising that the banking concept of education regards men as adaptable, manageable beings. The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them.”<sup>19</sup>

As an alternative, Freire proposes *problem-posing education*, which does not only deal with the transfer of *data* but with *cognition* in which the cognitive object is only a *mediator* between the subjects of cognition, students and teachers. Reality constantly becomes a problem and thus a challenge. Thereby, reality becomes not only an object of thought but also of action. Precisely this kind of education corresponds to the determination of humans as incomplete and unfinished beings, whose reality is also unfinished. Only in this way can education be a practice of freedom, and not a practice of domination.<sup>20</sup>

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Cf. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, Continuum, New York – London 2005, pp. 35–39, 53.

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Cf. *ibid.*, p. 55.

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*Ibid.*, p. 47.

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Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 65–67.

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*Ibid.*, p. 72.

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Cf. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope. Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Robert R. Barr, Continuum, New York 1994, pp. 116–117.

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Cf. M. Gadotti, *Reading Paulo Freire*, pp. 52–53.

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Cf. Paulo Freire, Antonio Faundez, *Learning to Question. A Pedagogy of Liberation*, trans. Tony Coates, World Council of Churches, Geneva 1989, pp. 34–38.

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P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 72.

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*Ibid.*, p. 73.

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Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 79–84. For more information on problem-posing education and the concrete examples how it may be practiced see: Nina Wallerstein, “Problem-Posing Education: Freire’s Method for Transformation”, in: Ira Shor (ed.), *Freire for the Classroom. A Sourcebook for Liberation Teaching*, Heinemann, Portsmouth NH 1987, pp. 33–44. See also: M. Gadotti, *Reading Paulo Freire*, pp. 18–27.

According to Freire, educators should not introduce their own program to students. Education should appear in dialogue. In dialogical learning in an interdisciplinary team teacher encounters the thematic universe of students, from which the process starts, in order to bring it back to them as a problem. As participants move toward later phases of learning, they are encouraged to recall their earlier perception, and by “perception of the previous perception” or “knowledge of the previous knowledge” become aware of different ways in which they can conceptualize both themselves and their reality.<sup>21</sup> The oppressed, in short, should constantly question their thought at the same moment they question the world.

“Further, domination is itself *objectively* divisive. It maintains the oppressed *I* in a position of ‘adhesion’ to a reality which seems all-powerful and overwhelming, and then alienates by presenting mysterious forces to explain this power. Part of the oppressed *I* is located in the reality to which it ‘adheres’; part is located outside the self, in the mysterious forces which are regarded as responsible for a reality about which nothing can be done. The individual is divided between an identical past and present, and a future without hope. He or she is a person who does not perceive himself or herself as *becoming*; hence cannot have a future to be built in unity with others. But as he or she breaks this ‘adhesion’ and objectifies the reality from which he or she starts to emerge, the person begins to integrate as a Subject (an *I*) confronting an object (reality). At this moment, sundering the false unity of the divided self, one becomes a true individual.”<sup>22</sup>

It is against the oppressors’ interest, says Freire, that the oppressed consider themselves and the world. Therefore, the world must be mythicised, i.e., consideration of it as a problem must be thwarted. The world should thus be given, leaving to people no other option but to merely spectate and adapt to it. The myths one should interiorize in order to be subjugated (in this case, to the capitalist system) are, e.g., the myth of the oppressive order as a free society, the myth of freedom of choosing one’s job, the myth of everyone’s availability to become an entrepreneur, and even “that the street vendor is as much an entrepreneur as the owner of a large factory”, etc.<sup>23</sup> Human beings can change themselves only to the extent in which they change reality. However, the latter is possible only if they change it as *their own world* and if they change it with *labour which is truly theirs*:

“People are fulfilled only to the extent that they create their world (which is a human world), and create it with their transforming labor. The fulfillment of humankind as human beings lies, then, in the fulfillment of the world. If for a person to be in the world of work is to be totally dependent, insecure, and permanently threatened – if their work does not belong to them – the person cannot be fulfilled. Work that is not free ceases to be a fulfilling pursuit and becomes an effective means of dehumanisation.”<sup>24</sup>

For Freire, there is no essential difference between political organizing and the pedagogical process, as he understands both notions. In revolutionary action, as well as in the educational one, the oppressed and leaders appear as Subjects, while reality is a mediator for their transformative actions. Knowledge of the causes of reality, crucial for social transformation, does not appear in the minds of leaders but in the dialogue of their critical and the popular experiential knowledge. In order for a revolution to be a cultural activity, i.e., to prepare a cultural revolution, it must not reject its educational quality. Leaders must behave educationally at every stage of the revolution, thus even before taking power. Otherwise, there appears only a manipulation of the people, not their liberation – continuation of oppression, not revolution.<sup>25</sup> In the same sense, a teacher’s unwillingness to become a student (or inability to become one in the banking concept of education) can only lead to manipulation, never to authentic education.<sup>26</sup>

“Political action on the side of the oppressed must be pedagogical action in the authentic sense of the word, and, therefore, action *with* the oppressed.”<sup>27</sup>

## Childhood and Life

The authentic meaning of the pedagogical action is not explicitly elaborated by Freire here. However, taking the context of his thought into consideration, it is clear this is not the paternalistic “child leading” but leading in a sense in which it is described above, both in an educative and revolutionary manner. Moreover, it seems that Freire does not pay much attention to children but mostly to grownups. Why is then his pedagogy of the oppressed not rather named *andragogy of the oppressed*?

Perhaps one of the main reasons as to why Freire does not write much about educating children is that *remaining a child* is a condition of proper education. This condition, or imperative, can be found in a number of his works. As Walter Oman Kohan points out, his *Letters to Nathercinha* are “an anthem to childhood”. This is where he determines the cause of the current state of the world as the consequence of grownups’ expulsion of childhood from themselves. As a desirable result of the transformation of the world, he sees adults laughing like children and, in the same depiction, like rose trees. Freire argues that laughter is “the expression of the joy of living, the will to do things, to transform the world”, and adult life needs to cultivate its own childhood “to the extent that it supplies vitality to life”. Therefore, Freire was not so devoted to the *education of children*, simply because he wanted to *educate childlike people*. This is confirmed by the fact that he raised a properly child-like view to the level of the greatest compliment to revolution.<sup>28</sup> Kohan refers here to Freire’s evaluation of the Nicaraguan Revolution, which effectively concludes the book of his conversations with Antonio Faundez:

“On my first visit to Managua in November 1979, speaking to a large group of educators at the ministry of education, I said that the Nicaraguan revolution seemed to me to be a revolution in its infancy – in its infancy, not in the sense that it was newly arrived, but by the evidence it was giving of its curiosity, its restlessness, its delight in questioning, its not being afraid to dream, its desire to grow, to be creative and to bring about change. I also said on that hot afternoon that it was necessary, essential, for the Nicaraguan people, in their struggle to bring their revolution to maturity, not to let it grow old by killing the infant in itself, which was part of its being. I was back there recently. The infant is still lively, still learning to question, still committed to building a pedagogy of questioning.”<sup>29</sup>

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Cf. P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 109, 115, 124.

22

Ibid., p. 173.

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Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 139–140.

24

Ibid., p. 145.

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Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 128–129, 133–134, 178.

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Cf. Milan Polić, *K filozofiji odgoja [Toward the Philosophy of Education]*, Znamen – Institut

za pedagoškijska istraživanja Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Zagreb 1993, pp. 16–18.

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P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 66.

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Cf. W. O. Kohan, *Paulo Freire*, pp. 136–137, 141–142.

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P. Freire, A. Faundez, *Learning to Question*, p. 140; W. O. Kohan, *Paulo Freire*, p. 140.

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Cf. W. O. Kohan, *Paulo Freire*, pp. 142–143.

One could say that the more childish the revolution, the more revolutionary and educative it is, as well as that the best educator is a childish one.<sup>30</sup> If by students one means children, as one usually does, then the above-mentioned student-teacher relationship should be reformulated so that the teacher (in a certain sense) should not only learn from the student but also become a student in a more profound way, by becoming a child. Kohan will sharpen this even more when he says of Freire:

“Childhood is a form of all education, at any and every age. This is the paradox of the one who dedicated his life for the education of adults: in the way that Freire conceives of education, including the education of youth and adults, it cannot be, among other things, an education for children, because what constitutes childhood is already a condition of this education. Being unquiet, asking, doubting, asking questions, creating: this childlike education, attentive to childhood, invites students, whatever their age may be, to live in childhood; those that inhabit and dwell in it, keep it alive and take care of it; those who forgot it or lose it must recover it or reinvent it.”<sup>31</sup>

The imperative to *become* a child certainly does not exclude the imperative to *preserve* childhood in children themselves. The key moment here is “what constitutes childhood”. The paradox rather lies in the imperative to “preserve change” or to “preserve becoming”. Nevertheless, it is needed because childish development can cease on behalf of adult ossification as early as childhood. After all, this ossification is often a goal of education institutions, aiming at what Dewey explains as turning the constant growth into an *accomplished growth* – the goal of growth being *ungrowth*.<sup>32</sup> This is why true educators in many cases find themselves in the situation where they need to create a need for questioning in their students, and not to keep and cultivate that need. Freire, together with his first wife Elza, made an effort in raising his children to preserve this need, so he never denied them answers to questions in any situation.<sup>33</sup> Freire’s early life, on the other hand, can be indicative of the way in which certain challenges to crucial childlike elements for education can arise very early from other sources – from a reality that needs to be changed in order to evade the mentioned ossification.

Since early childhood Freire has developed intense intimacy with nature, starting with the trees around the house in which he grew up, the trees that seemed to him like people.<sup>34</sup> The backyard of the house, full of trees and birds that inhabited them, as he writes in the *Pedagogy of the Heart*, formed his “first world” and constituted his immediate objectivity, a point of reference that constituted him.<sup>35</sup> In his case, such recollections are by no means “a ridiculous nostalgia”:

“For me to return to my distant childhood is a necessary act of curiosity. The more I return to my distant childhood the more I realise that there is always something there worth knowing.”<sup>36</sup>

As Kohan explains, Freire’s attitude toward nature was partly changed by his family’s getting into economic troubles during his childhood, being at the same time forced to prematurely become an adult. Intimacy with nature was increasingly suppressed by the need to find sustenance for his life. This does not mean that this intimacy completely subsided.<sup>37</sup> But the loss is in a sense obvious, sometimes in certain contradictions present in the same book. The *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is illustrative for this purpose.

Freire repeatedly invokes Erich Fromm, especially with regard to the problem of the transformation of the oppressed into inanimate things for the purpose of satisfying the oppressor’s desire for possession. Where Freire quotes him, Fromm directly says that the essence of the sadistic urge is not only the

pleasure of complete domination over another person but also over “another animate creature” and that the sadist’s goal is to turn the living into the inanimate through complete control. The banking system of education “kills” creativity by supervision, involves the mechanistic and static understanding of consciousness, and forms students as those who need to adapt to reality. Therefore, this system cannot enable the development of biophilia but only necrophilia, love of the inanimate, mechanical, and not the love of the growth as a quality of life. In another quoting of Fromm on this issue, every living being is again clearly placed in the same category – a necrophilic person cannot associate with anything if they do not possess it, be it a human or a flower. The supervision required for this possessive stance kills life. In the realisation of the oppressor’s necrophilic worldview, they use science and technology.<sup>38</sup> Although the latter thesis is not elaborated here, it is clear that the desire to oppress the non-human living beings often includes scientific notions, from the Cartesian animal-machine to the contemporary representation of a living being as a bundle of genetic data.<sup>39</sup> These representations turn the living into the dead in order to facilitate the rationalisation of possession and instrumentalisation of living beings. On the other hand, Freire claims that science has a tendency to put an end to change in order to be objective, and thus to fix the animate into the inanimate, i.e., to prevent change rather than to encourage and deepen it.<sup>40</sup>

However, there are also different emphases in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Namely, Freire insists on a sharp difference between human and non-human animals, e.g., “in contrast to other animals who are unfinished, but not historical, people know themselves to be unfinished; they are aware of their incompleteness”.<sup>41</sup> The reasons for this statement are summarised in the following (rather long but instructive) quotation:

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Ibid., p. 148. It should be noted that he, nevertheless, does write directly about educating children, e.g. in: Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation*, Routledge, London – New York 2016, pp. 8–13.

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Cf. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, The Macmillan Company, New York 1930, p. 50.

33

Cf. P. Freire, A. Faundez, *Learning to Question*, p. 35.

34

Cf. Paulo Freire, *Letters to Cristina. Reflections on My Life and Work*, trans. Donald Macedo, Quilda Macedo, Alexandre Oliveira, Routledge, New York – London 1996, p. 25.

35

Cf. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Heart*, trans. Donald Macedo, Alexandre Oliveira, Continuum, New York 2000, pp. 37–38.

36

P. Freire, *Letters to Cristina*, p. 13.

37

Cf. W. O. Kohan, *Paulo Freire*, pp. 124–125, 128.

38

Cf. P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 59–60, 77.

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Cf. J. Guć, *Poticaji za bioetičko promišljenje odnosa kulture i prirode u djelu Nikole Viskovića*, pp. 28–30.

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Cf. P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 108. He also points out that the oppressors, in order to make the oppression more successful, consult science and technology in order to discover the way in which the oppressed comprehend reality. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 153.

41

*Ibid.*, p. 84.

“One may well remember – trite as it seems – that, of the uncompleted beings, man is the only one to treat not only his actions but his very self as the object of his reflection; this capacity distinguishes him from the animals, which are unable to separate themselves from their activity and thus are unable to reflect upon it. In this apparently superficial distinction lie the boundaries which delimit the action of each in his life space. Because the animals’ activity is an extension of themselves, the results of that activity are also inseparable from themselves: animals can neither set objectives nor infuse their transformation of nature with any significance beyond itself. Moreover, the ‘decision’ to perform this activity belongs not to them but to their species. Animals are, accordingly, fundamentally ‘beings in themselves.’ Unable to decide for themselves, unable to objectify either themselves or their activity, lacking objectives which they themselves have set, living ‘submerged’ in a world to which they can give no meaning, lacking a ‘tomorrow’ and a ‘today’ because they exist in an overwhelming present, animals are ahistorical. Their ahistorical life does not occur in the ‘world,’ taken in its strict meaning; for the animal, the world does not constitute a ‘not-I’ which could set him apart as an ‘I.’ The human world, which is historical, serves as a mere prop for the ‘being in itself.’ Animals are not challenged by the configuration which confronts them; they are merely stimulated. Their life is not one of risk-taking, for they are not aware of taking risks. Risks are not challenges perceived upon reflection, but merely ‘noted’ by the signs which indicate them; they accordingly do not require decision-making responses. Consequently, animals cannot commit themselves. Their ahistorical condition does not permit them to ‘take on’ life. Because they do not ‘take it on,’ they cannot construct it; and if they do not construct it, they cannot transform its configuration. Nor can they know themselves to be destroyed by life, for they cannot expand their ‘prop’ world into a meaningful, symbolic world which includes culture and history. As a result, animals do not ‘animalize’ their configuration in order to animalize themselves – nor do they ‘de-animalize’ themselves. Even in the forest, they remain ‘beings-in-themselves,’ as animal-like there as in the zoo.”<sup>42</sup>

Finally, human beings, “unlike animals, not only live but exist”, i.e., they do not only survive but are also historically becoming.<sup>43</sup> In this way, non-human life in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* primarily appears as an object of comparison to the human. The problem with this comparison can be formulated in the following question: Why does the representation of human self-realisation generally need comparison with other living beings? This, however, has its justification in the case of inevitable moral conflicts. Nevertheless, the comparison often additionally impoverishes insight into the possibilities of animal self-realisation. This is morally relevant because by narrowing insight into animal self-realisation one can easily overlook some of its elements that should be respected by moral agents. The thesis that animals are themselves in the same sense being captivated or not (independently of the issue of suffering that may be caused or thwarted by captivity) is exactly one of the examples for the mentioned narrowing, which is at the same time the narrowing of one’s moral reflection. Thus, despite the attribution of vitality and incompleteness to the animal, particular Freire’s qualifications can be helpful in the temptation to approach the animal oppressively. Although his analysis of human possibilities is done in a way that should not cause much controversy, putting an animal on the other end of a binary opposition clearly misses the specific richness that life has in all its stages and cannot simply be reduced to survival.<sup>44</sup>

The description of the constellation which Freire presents by quoting Fromm should rather go in the direction of finding reasons for solidarity, i.e., striving to cultivate the vitality of all living beings in their own forms. Perhaps a more careful preservation of the childlike sensibility can encourage such implications. Children’s comparisons, which many parents have encountered (and often reacted to wrongly), are more in the favor than at the expense of animals (e.g., “if pigs feel pain like us, we should not kill them”). Not taking animals seriously in adults can at least partially be described as the result of the repression of childish curiosity, delight in questioning, and the need to bring about

change in our relationship toward them. Freire could have learned this from his own theory. The point concerning childhood could be partially summed up by Dewey's thought:

“With respect to sympathetic curiosity, unbiased responsiveness, and openness of mind, we may say that the adult should be growing in childlikeness.”<sup>45</sup>

A possible objection that would read too much Promethean over-active Western stance from Freire's work, which thus could not be helpful for fighting climate crisis, may overlook Freire's understanding of the concept of *praxis*, which is by no means action without critical reflection, nor escapist idealism.<sup>46</sup> Praxis is, according to Freire, an act of liberation, the action which does not appear without reflection devoted to changing the world. Without reflection, action is mere activism, and reflection that sacrifices action is mere verbalism. To be human means to be a being of praxis. Thus, education in the proper sense, being a process of humanisation, is becoming nothing but praxis. Problem-posing education, which promotes praxis, should be rooted in the dynamic present and engage in the process of becoming “in the interplay of opposites *permanents* and *change*”, unlike the banking concept of education, which stops at the first element of the opposition. In their praxis with the oppressed, revolutionaries and educators should not try to “reside” in them. Only through praxis can people constantly become historical Subjects, and not remain objects of the forces of dehumanizing reality.<sup>47</sup>

However, in order to definitely refute the above-mentioned possible objection, it is crucial to understand that this socio-economic reality also generates an ecological crisis, as well as a destructive attitude toward non-living beings, so that any passive approach to such a reality cannot be morally favourable both to humans and nature. After all, the need for reinforcing sensibility toward nature does not imply that our destructive attitude should be resolved exclusively in a natural way, starting from the fact that nature alone cannot provide normative instructions. Unless the latter are understood as ideological or as those which are constructed in the realm of a given world and completed human constitution, the perception and exceeding of human capabilities through praxis is a matter of responsibility. One must overcome the obstacles of the given in order to become a *more responsible* – Subject. It is here that we find that Freire's concept of the subject is different from the subject of the Enlightenment in the version in which it is (more or less justifiably) criticised by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno.<sup>48</sup> For Freire, the more one is a subject, the more responsible (and not conquering) beings they are.

42  
Ibid., pp. 97–98.

43  
Cf. *ibid.*, p. 98.

44  
Hans Jonas is one of the most instructive authors on the issue of the richness of life. See Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life. Toward a Philosophical Biology*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 2001.

45  
J. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 59.

46  
Cf. Denis Goulet, “Introduction”, in: Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, Continuum, London – New York 2005, pp. vii–xiii, here p. ix.

47  
Cf. P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 79, 84, 87, 125–128, 160.

48  
See: Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2002.

Freire surely was not disinterested in environmental issues, at least not by the end of his life. In the paper “Ecopedagogy. The Missing Chapter of Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, Greg William Misiaszek and Carlos Alberto Torres refer to Freire’s words from a conversation the latter had with Torres and Gadotti, in which he “insisted on the need of a planetary citizenship and ecopedagogy as a model to defend the planet, a most oppressed entity, in his words”. Moreover,

“... the essence of *ecopedagogy* was the subject in which he stated was the book’s missing chapter and was to be the topic of his next book, which unfortunately was not completed because of his death in 1997.”<sup>49</sup>

However, particular places can be found in which Freire does not only give abstract claims out of which it is hard to understand the motivation of care for the environment but where he approaches biocentric (or even physiocentric) moral scope. For example, while making remarks on market “ethics”, he talks about the need to

“... fight for more fundamental ethical principles, such as respect for the life of human beings, the life of other animals, of birds, and for the life of rivers and forests. I do not believe in loving among women and men, among human beings, if we do not become capable of loving the world. Ecology has gained tremendous importance at the end of this century. It must be present in any educational practice of a radical, critical, and liberating nature.”<sup>50</sup>

Another example of Freire’s appreciation of life, which is much closer to the above-mentioned Fromm’s reflections, can be found in the following, where he even prescribes freedom to life as its inherent feature:

“That is true to the extent that there can be no life without at least a minimal presence of freedom. Even though life in itself implies freedom, that does not mean, in any way, that we can have it gratuitously. The enemies of life threaten it constantly. We must, therefore, fight to maintain it, at times to reconquer it, and at others to expand it. In any case, I do not believe that the fundamental nucleus of life, freedom and the fear of losing it, can ever be suppressed. It may be threatened. Life here is understood in the full broadness of the concept, rather than just as human life, which implies both freedom as movement or permanent search and freedom as concern about or fear of losing it. Freedom and the fear of losing life engender themselves into a deeper nucleus, one indispensable for life – that of communication. In that sense, the notion seems deplorable to me of engaging in progressive, revolutionary discourse while embracing a practice that negates life – that pollutes the air, the waters, the fields, and devastates forests, destroys the trees and threatens the animals.”<sup>51</sup>

The first of the two latter quotes belongs to the last written words by Freire (as it is witnessed by his second wife Ana Maria),<sup>52</sup> while the second was originally published in the last year of his life. Considering these two statements (together with a similar one made a few years earlier in the interview with Gadotti),<sup>53</sup> one may prescribe the greater openness for ethical and ontological appreciation of life to the common feature of elderly people who, in a sense, naturally become childish. However, in this case, this qualification would not be pejorative. Freire on many occasions emphasised his striving for the preservation of the child in himself, the one he was and the one he could not be, without which one cannot be a philosopher. It is, he also says, “this child who leads me to love life so much”.<sup>54</sup> In this sense, where life is “understood in the full broadness of the concept, rather than just as human life”, the synthesis of childlikeness as the indispensable condition of education and childlike sensibility toward living beings is in no sense artificial or forcibly established. It could be said that even if a child could not completely survive in Freire, there is an unquestionable imperative in his work for remaining a child (in the

sense of the above-mentioned childlike features) in order to constantly become a human. At the very least, children in this sense can provide adults with valuable first-hand knowledge of gaining knowledge. This includes the need for questioning, and thus transformation, but also a rich sensibility toward life, which can rightly be named bioethical.<sup>55</sup> This sensibility is crucial for putting the current practices toward the environment and non-human living beings into question. One of its features being receptivity, sensibility allows us to be open to various aspects of reality. (Bioethical) sensibility allows us not only to be interested in the richness of non-human living beings' self-realisation but also to perceive more situations (our relationship toward them) as problems – sensibility in that sense “submits material” to critical thinking. Perhaps it was the very children's bioethical sensibility missing to write the missing chapter of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* more comprehensively, which should not diminish the value of Misiasek's and Torres' contributions, even less of Freire's own work. Luckily, as I have shown in this chapter, there are particular Freire's claims that one does not need to bioethicize, being already bioethical in a proper sense, and which additionally legitimize this attempt of bioethicisation.

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Cf. Greg William Misiasek, Carlos Alberto Torres, “Ecopedagogy. The Missing Chapter of Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, in: Carlos Alberto Torres (ed.), *The Wiley Handbook of Paulo Freire*, Wiley Blackwell, Hoboken 2019, pp. 463–488, here p. 464, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119236788.ch25>.

50

P. Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation*, p. 47. The quote is also partially present in: G. W. Misiasek, C. A. Torres, “Ecopedagogy”, p. 468.

51

P. Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation*, p. 120. The quote is partially also given in: G. W. Misiasek, C. A. Torres, “Ecopedagogy”, p. 468. That freedom (in different scales) is present in every living being (as metabolism being the first form of freedom) was also the crucial point of Jonas' philosophical biology. Cf. H. Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, pp. 1–5.

52

P. Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation*, pp. 47–48.

53

“I think that freedom is a natural quality of the human being. I would even say, more radically, that freedom makes part of the nature of life, whether it is animal or vegetable. The tree that grows and bends to look for the sun makes a movement of freedom, but one that is conditioned to its species, merely a vital impulse, not the instinct of freedom of a dog.” – M. Gadotti, *Reading Paulo Freire*,

pp. 148–149. Due to the fact that this is said as an *intermezzo* of arguing on liberation (both of restoration and invention of freedom) as crucial task of the time (ibid.), one may also read this quote in the *context* of this task.

54

Cf. Paulo Freire, *The Politics of Education. Culture, Power, and Liberation*, trans. Donaldo Macedo, Bergin & Garvey Publishers, New York – Westport – London 1985, p. 197; W. O. Kohan, *Paulo Freire*, pp. 148–150.

55

I tried to demonstrate the meaning of bioethical sensibility in: J. Guć, *Poticaži za bioetičko promišljenje odnosa kulture i prirode u djelu Nikole Viskovića*, pp. 243–246; where I also discussed its determinations in integrative bioethics by Ante Čović and Ivana Zagorac. Cf. Ante Čović, “Znanje i moralnost” [“Knowledge and Morality”], *Filozofska istraživanja* 17 (1997) 4, pp. 1049–1064; Ivana Zagorac, *Bioetički senzibilitet [Bioethical Sensibility]*, Pergamena – Znanstveni centar izvrsnosti za integrativnu bioetiku, Zagreb 2018. I also gave a short, (maybe too) simple, and provisory definition of bioethical sensibility as “sensitivity and receptivity for the issues concerning life, i.e. living beings, especially in moral aspect”. – Bruno Čurko, Josip Guć, *Odgovori za životinje. Razvijanje kritičkog mišljenja i bioetičkog senzibiliteta kod djece [Education for Animals. Development of Critical Thinking and Bioethical Sensibility in Children]*, Mala filozofija, Zadar 2022, p. 48.

## Dialogue and Pluri-Perspectivity

Pluri-perspectivity is, alongside bioethical sensibility, one of the key concepts of integrative bioethics, and its central methodological determinant. In the following, I will demonstrate not only that Freire's "method"<sup>56</sup> is compatible with this concept but also that it has strong potentiality for contributing to the pluri-perspective methodology.

Jurić, one of the key figures of integrative bioethics, recognises mono-perspectivism and reductionism as the basic problems of modern science and education. In other words, what characterises both science and education is the loss of the (idea of the) whole by fragmentation and specialisation. Techno-science is imposed as the only legitimate form of knowledge, which is combined with equally reductionist and mono-perspective forms of economics and politics. It is precisely the inability of this combination to provide orientation knowledge (*Mittelstraß*) for solving issues concerning (human and non-human) life – the issues mostly caused by it – that prompted the occurrence of bioethics. The latter, especially in the integrative bioethical form, insists on "the need for an all-embracing perspective on the issues of the life", being theoretically shaped into the notion of *pluri-perspectivism*.<sup>57</sup>

"This concept refers to the incorporation and mediation through dialogue of not only scientific but also of non-scientific (i.e. cultural) contributions, including different modes of reflection, different traditions of thought and culture, i.e. diverse views that rest on cultural, gender, religious, political and other specificities."<sup>58</sup>

For this purpose, it will suffice to quote Jurić once more in his summarisation of the idea of integrative bioethics:

"Idea of *integrative bioethics* (which can be also widened towards the idea of *integrative thought*) call upon a wider view on and deeper insights into the life and the world. However, neither integrative bioethics nor integrative thought should stop at the boundaries of theory. Theory implies raising the consciousness and empowerment of a particular human being which is both an individual as an 'end in itself' and as a social being, so that the scope of this intellectual empowerment is always defining the role of a particular individual in the social context and 'tuning' the influence one can have on its own life and the life of the community by following some inter-subjectively defined norms such as freedom, justice, solidarity, etc. Therefore, theory should always lead to significant socio-political changes. Nevertheless, it is not a 'new instrumentalisation of theory' (for example: science should be subordinated to the social engagement and used as a mere tool of 'revolutionary action'). It is only a new or renewed way of achieving the meaning of science and education. Science and education are the ways in which we try to enclose the Whole by our thoughts, and to build it by our action. What the 'Whole' means, we cannot know, except by (re)thinking and (re)acting simultaneously."<sup>59</sup>

What is meant in the last sentence of this quote is clearly related to Freire's understanding of praxis, especially since the latter is also aimed at revealing the whole:

"The investigation will be most educational when it is most critical, and most critical when it avoids the narrow outlines of partial or 'focalised' views of reality, and sticks to the comprehension of *total* reality. Thus, the process of searching for the meaningful thematics should include a concern for the links between themes, a concern to pose these themes as problems, and a concern for their historical-cultural context."<sup>60</sup>

According to Freire, the oppressed consciousness perceives only epiphenomena of a limit-situation.<sup>61</sup> A consciousness that lacks the critical reflection of reality inevitably perceives it in fragments, which cannot be understood as interactive parts of the whole. It is therefore necessary to start from the context of a certain situation, the fragments of which ought to be examined in

their interactions.<sup>62</sup> The above-mentioned thoughts also indicate an implicit need for overcoming all components of the unique assault on life, and not only of the reductionist techno-scientific image of the world. Reality should be unmasked (demystified) by removing the veil of mono-perspectivism in knowledge in order to make it adequate for the self-realisation of all living beings. For the same reason, it is necessary to unveil the mono-perspective “truth” of the economy and politics. However, the latter can most adequately be done by intervening in the socio-political reality in order to find out that the “objective social reality” was nothing but ideological mystification.

In regard to the pluri-perspective dialogue, one can notice here an important potential for the philosophisation of bioethics from the perspective of the philosophy of education such as Freire's. One should note the need for inclusion of the oppressed into the pluri-perspective dialogue on bioethical issues, because their lives are also (and first among humans) endangered by a wider techno-scientific-economic-political assault on life (or on the planet as “a most oppressed entity”). These oppressed could concretely be victims of an ecological crisis or workers at industrial farms. A dialogue with them could be helpful in detecting possibilities and obstacles of developing solidarity with their non-human co-victims. Moreover, following Freire, the oppressed should, together with an interdisciplinary team of professionals, work on *naming the world*.

According to Freire, to say the right *word* at the same time means to transform the *world*. The authentic word is thus also a praxis. When the world is named, it reveals itself as a problem that requires new naming. The naming cannot be done in solitude, it requires a dialogue in which it is not possible to say the true word for another, i.e., to deprive others of their words. Thus the dialogue is “the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world”.<sup>63</sup> The phrase “to call things by their names” can in a certain sense illustrate what Freire tries to say by naming the world as opposed to the mystifying language of the oppressors. Following the above-mentioned

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“Strictly speaking, one shouldn't speak about the Paulo Freire ‘method’ as it is much more a theory of knowledge and an educational philosophy than a teaching method.” – M. Gadotti, *Reading Paulo Freire*, p. 16.

57

Cf. Hrvoje Jurić, “Multi-disciplinarity, Pluri-perspectivity and Integrativity in the Science and the Education”, *The Holistic Approach to Environment* 2 (2012) 2, pp. 85–90, here pp. 85–88.

58

*Ibid.*, p. 88.

59

*Ibid.*, pp. 89–90.

60

P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 108.

61

The notion of “limit-situation” in Freire does not represent Jaspers' concept but Alvaro

Vieira Pinto's interpretation, for whom “the ‘limit-situations’ are not ‘the impassable boundaries where possibilities end, but the real boundaries where all possibilities begin’; they are not ‘the frontier which separates being from nothingness, but the frontier which separates being from being more’”. They are, in short, limits of liberation which are ideologically mystified as impassable. Therefore, they must be perceived “as concrete historical dimensions of a given reality”, beyond which there is *untested feasibility*. This critical perception, of course, must be embodied in action in order to overcome a limit-situation, after which another limit-situation occurs, etc. – Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 99–100, 102.

62

Cf. *ibid.*, p. 104.

63

Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 87–88.

examples, a free society is not one where the market is free but where the labor is free, where other aspects of human self-realisation can flourish, where there are no oppressors nor the oppressed, etc. However, both students and people have their own ways of naming the world, which should dialogically, with educators' or leaders' critical insights, develop in the constant renaming of the world – never imposed by educators or leaders on students or the people, and vice versa.

“Organizing the people is the process in which the revolutionary leaders, who are also prevented from saying their own word, initiate the experience of learning how to *name* the world. This is true learning experience, and therefore dialogical. So it is that the leaders cannot say their word alone; they must say it *with* the people. Leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people – they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress.”<sup>64</sup>

Therefore, the mystifying language can also occur in leaders and educators, if they do not appreciate the words of the people and students. In order for the dialogical naming of the world to take place, it is not only necessary for educators or leaders to open up to students or the people, it is also necessary for the latter to overcome their own self-depreciation. This is the result, says Freire, of internalizing the oppressors' opinions of them. For example, peasants that participate in educational projects often consider themselves stupid, asking the professor to explain the given problem, not realizing that they themselves have a rich knowledge in relation to the world and other people. That they have this knowledge is also evident in the frequent lively discussions on generative topics, which are frequently interrupted by themselves, feeling guilty for taking the word away from the educator, the one who knows. In order not to perceive this educator as an oppressor, it is necessary for the oppressed to expel the oppressor from themselves and to demystify them.<sup>65</sup>

Considering Friedrich Kaulbach's appreciation of non-relativistic perspectivism, especially in the context of *meaningful truth* of the world of freedom,<sup>66</sup> which is one of the footholds of integrative bioethics, one should also notice Freire's unwillingness to present himself as impartial or objective. However, this stance did not make him renounce a firm ethical position. Being partial, a point of view is not automatically erroneous, unless it is dogmatic. His partiality lies in the point of view of the “wretched of the earth”.<sup>67</sup> However, regarding the above-mentioned, the latter point of view is not arbitrary. It is founded on the fact that both the oppressors and the oppressed can only be liberated by the oppressed. It is also clear that this does not mean that the thoughts and actions of the oppressed should not be critically approached. For example, he strongly condemns their acts of terrorism:

“Terrorism is the negation of what I call a universal human ethic.”<sup>68</sup>

Finally, the mere fact that Freire insists on the dialogue between (an interdisciplinary team of) experts and students is a sufficient argument for Freire's pluri-perspective, and not a closed perspective approach.

As Freire says in the *Education for Critical Consciousness*, the first formulation of his educational practice was made while he was the Coordinator of the Adult Education Project of the Movement of Popular Culture in Recife. The form in which this kind of education was practiced was named *cultural circles*. The group would choose a topic, which was then presented to it with visual aids, used to bring about dialogue. At the same time Freire and his colleagues engaged in literacy education, they tried to raise a critical attitude

with the participants. The literacy program was meant to be an introduction to the democratisation of culture. Even before an illiterate turns into a literate person, they should overcome their magic understanding (of the “unchangeable” world) and discover “himself to be a maker of the world of culture”, as well as their creative and re-creative impulses.<sup>69</sup>

“To introduce the concept of culture, first we ‘broke down’ this concept into its fundamental aspects. Then, on the basis of this breakdown, we ‘codified’ (i.e., represented visually) ten existential situations. [...] Each representation contained a number of elements to be ‘decoded’ by the group participants, with the help of the coordinator.”<sup>70</sup>

The emancipatory education should start and can be thwarted at the point of literacy learning. Freire shows how literacy learning of adults usually involves examples that illustrate an ideology of accommodation. However, illiteracy is, in the first place, a political problem, not solely a pedagogical or linguistic one. Thus, overcoming it should also be political, in the sense that students

“... are challenged to perceive the deeper meaning of language and the word, the word that, in essence, they are being denied. To deny the word implies something more: It implies the denial of the right to ‘proclaim the world.’”

Therefore, literacy learning should simultaneously include the reading of one’s reality. And this can only be done by starting from *generative words*, those which “incorporate a meaningful thematic of the learners’ lives”. These words are used in realistic problem situations (as codifications) in order to problematize them (thus to decodify them), while illiterate learners gradually apprehend that “to speak is not the same as to ‘utter a word’”.<sup>71</sup>

“Cultural action, as political-pedagogical action including literacy education, is not, however, always obliged to revolve around it. It is often possible and, more than that, essential, to work with communities helping them to ‘read’ the reality of their situation in association with projects to act on it, such as collective vegetable gardens and production cooperatives, closely linked with health education campaigns, without the need for the population actually to read words. We can thus state that, while all learning to read and write words in a political perspective [...] inevitably involves ‘reading’ and ‘writing’ reality, i.e. involvement of the population in projects to act on reality, not every programme to act on reality initially involves actually learning to read and write words.”<sup>72</sup>

64  
Ibid., pp. 177–178.

65  
Cf. *ibid.*, p. 63–65.

66  
Cf. Friedrich Kaulbach, *Philosophie des Perspektivismus*, vol. 1, *Wahrheit und Perspektive bei Kant, Hegel und Nietzsche*, Mohr, Tübingen 1990.

67  
Cf. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom. Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*, trans. Patrick Clarke, Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham – Oxford 1998, p. 22.

68  
Ibid. Freire’s ethics is mostly elaborated in the *Pedagogy of Freedom*. However, further

elaboration on this matter is beyond the scope of this paper.

69  
Cf. Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, Continuum, London – New York 2005, pp. 37–41.

70  
Ibid., p. 42.

71  
Cf. P. Freire, *The Politics of Education*, pp. 7–13.

72  
P. Freire, A. Faundez, *Learning to Question*, pp. 114–115.

For (integrative) bioethics to really be a social movement, it is necessary not only that experts (in different fields of knowledge and action) rewrite the world but also that this rewriting includes active participation of the oppressed of this world. Even though dialogue is indispensable in this task, concrete actions on changing the world make insight into the historical contingency of the given world much more probable. This is not only the key for demystifying the given reality. Without overcoming oppression, the oppressed are more involved with the conflict of grounds of obligations between themselves and non-human living beings. They are mostly forced to give advantage to themselves (and their families) and not to non-human living beings or the environment, which is used by the oppressors who (ironically being more destructive toward non-human living beings and the environment) accuse them of irresponsibility toward these. This can be indirectly done by the “neutral” concept of education, where environmental issues are not discussed in a political manner. Responsibility here becomes an even greater political issue when associated with human (not to forget the non-human) health (another great bioethical issue), where the responsibility for an individual’s own health is prescribed to the victims of the oppressors’ irresponsible behaviour (even more often than in the former case).<sup>73</sup> Being instilled in the oppressed, the latter could accept these false notions of responsibility. Not only that the oppressor should be excluded from the oppressed in this sense but also in the sense of overcoming the oppressor as the only paradigm of proper human life.<sup>74</sup> If this overcoming does not occur, the oppressed can at least be a “proper human” by oppressing the lower on the scale, i.e., non-human living beings.

The point of this can be summarised in Freire’s hope of what the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* should preserve in himself, which can be taken as an instruction for everyone else:

“From these pages I hope at least the following will endure: my trust in the people, and my faith in men and women, and in the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love.”<sup>75</sup>

By the addressees of love he surely did not mean exclusively fellow humans but generally, as it is testified by his son Lutgartes,

“... the love for life. The love for the birds, love for the sun, love for nature, the love for people.”<sup>76</sup>

## Conclusion

Many thoughts and practices imposed by Paulo Freire are not only compatible with integrative bioethics, but they can enrich its strivings for “rewriting” our

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In this sense, insisting on starting from the student’s perspective, Freire asks simple questions: “Why not, for example, take advantage of the students’ experience of life in those parts of the city neglected by the authorities to discuss the problems of pollution in the rivers and the question of poverty and the risks to health from the rubbish heaps in such areas? Why are there no rubbish heaps in the heart of the rich areas of the city?” He proceeds to give an ironic answer: “This question is considered ‘in bad taste.’ Pure demagoguery. Almost

subversive, say the defenders of democracy.” – P. Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, p. 36.

<sup>74</sup>

Cf. P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 45–46.

<sup>75</sup>

*Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>76</sup>

W. O. Kohan, *Paulo Freire*, p. 207.

relationship with non-human living beings and nature as such. The two most fruitful elements for this task are distinguished in the paper. First is Freire's emphasis on what constitutes childhood as a paradigm of proper educational and revolutionary conduct of both subjects (educators/leaders and students/people) of these processes. Here distinguished qualities, such as receptiveness, the will to change, etc., are both directly and indirectly brought in a relationship with non-human nature, and associated with what is in integrative bioethics formulated as bioethical sensibility. The second crucial term of this bioethical orientation is pluri-perspectivity, with which I associated Freire's emphasis on dialogue on every step of educational or revolutionary action, as the second distinguished element. The application of Freire's concept and practice of dialogue in the pluri-perspective methodology of integrative bioethics can provide the latter to fulfil its proclaimed quality of being not only intellectual but also a social movement. This can also make integrative bioethics' moral quest (which is at the same time political) of a more responsible attitude toward non-human living beings more situated in the concrete reality of oppression, where the latter should be abolished in order to facilitate this moral quest.

Josip Guć

### Doprinos bioeticizaciji filozofije odgoja Paula Freirea

#### Sažetak

*U ovom se radu pokušava ukazati na misli Paula Freirea koje bi mogle biti plodne u kontekstu bioetičkog razmatranja odnosa čovjeka spram prirode, tj. ne-ljudskih živih bića, poglavito s obzirom na razvoj bioetičkog senzibiliteta, posebice prisutnog kod djece. S obzirom na to da izvjesne osobine, kompatibilne s idejom bioetičkog senzibiliteta, pripadne djetinjstvu sačinjavaju srž Freireove filozofije odgoja, radi se o području u kojem bioeticizacija Freireove misli može biti osobito plodna. Pored toga, u radu se iznose i njegovi stavovi koji idu u smjeru moralne obzirnosti spram ne-ljudskih živih bića, kao i oni koji su ovima donekle kontradiktorni, s obzirom na to da pružaju osiromašene uvide u bogatstvo samoostvarivanja ne-ljudskih živih bića. Prije ovih razmatranja, dodatno se razjašnjava pojam bioeticizacije filozofije, posebice s obzirom na blisko vezan (programatski) pojam europeizacije bioetike. Oba se ova pojma koriste u kontekstu integrativne bioetike. U posljednjem se poglavlju pojašnjava potencijalni doprinos Freireove dijaloške metode razvitku pluriperspektivističke metodologije integrativne bioetike.*

#### Ključne riječi

Paulo Freire, bioeticizacija filozofije, filozofija odgoja, tlačenje, humanizacija, ne-ljudska živa bića, djetinjstvo, integrativna bioetika, pluriperspektivizam

Josip Guć

### Ein Beitrag zur Bioethisierung der Erziehungsphilosophie von Paulo Freire

#### Zusammenfassung

*Der Beitrag versucht, ein Schlaglicht auf Paulo Freires Gedanken zu werfen, die im Kontext einer bioethischen Betrachtung des menschlichen Verhältnisses zur Natur, d. h. zu nichtmenschlichen Lebewesen, vornehmlich im Hinblick auf die Entwicklung einer bioethischen Sensibilität, im Besonderen die Kinder betreffend, fruchtbringend sein könnten. Da bestimmte Kindheitsmerkmale, die mit der Idee der bioethischen Sensibilität vereinbar sind, den Dreh- und Angelpunkt von Freires Erziehungsphilosophie bilden, ist dies ein Bereich, in dem die Bioethisierung von Freires Gedanken besonders ergiebig sein kann. Darüber hinaus präsentiert die Arbeit*

*seine Sichtweisen im Zusammenhang mit der moralischen Achtung gegenüber nichtmenschlichen Lebewesen sowie solche, die dem geziemenden Respekt gegenüber Lebewesen einigermaßen widersprechen, zumal letztere Ansichten verarmte Einblicke in den Reichtum der Selbstverwirklichung der nichtmenschlichen Lebewesen liefern. Diesen Überlegungen vorausgehend wird die Notion der Bioethisierung der Philosophie näher erläutert, namentlich im Hinblick auf den eng verwandten (programmatischen) Begriff der Europäisierung der Bioethik. Beide Termini werden im Kontext der integrativen Bioethik verwendet. Im abschließenden Kapitel wird der potenzielle Beitrag von Freires dialogischer Methode zur Entwicklung einer pluriperspektivischen Methodologie der integrativen Bioethik dargelegt.*

#### **Schlüsselwörter**

Paulo Freire, Bioethisierung der Philosophie, Erziehungsphilosophie, Unterdrückung, Humanisierung, nichtmenschliche Lebewesen, Kindheit, integrative Bioethik, Pluriperspektivismus

### **Josip Guć**

## **Une contribution à la bioéthisation de la philosophie de Paulo Freire**

#### **Résumé**

*Le présent travail s'attache à mettre en lumière les pensées de Paul Freire qui pourraient être fécondes dans un contexte d'ordre éthique où la relation de l'homme envers la nature est étudiée, à savoir envers des êtres vivants non humains, notamment en ce qui concerne le développement de la sensibilité bioéthique, et en particulier celle des enfants. Étant donné que certains traits propres à l'enfance, compatibles avec l'idée de la sensibilité bioéthique, constituent le noyau de la philosophie de l'éducation de Freire, il est question d'un domaine où la bioéthisation de la philosophie de l'éducation de Freire peut particulièrement porter ses fruits. De plus, ce travail présente des vues associées à une approche morale envers les êtres vivants non humains, ainsi que celles qui leurs sont contradictoires, en raison du fait qu'elles amènent des idées appauvrissantes au sein de la richesse de la réalisation de soi des êtres vivants non humains. En amont de ces considérations, la notion de bioéthisation de la philosophie est davantage précisée, particulièrement en ce qui concerne la notion (programmatische) étroitement liée de l'europanisation de la bioéthique. Ces deux termes sont utilisés dans le contexte de la bioéthique intégrative. Dans le dernier chapitre, une potentielle contribution de la méthode dialogique de Freire au développement d'une méthodologie pluriperspectiviste de la bioéthique intégrative est expliquée.*

#### **Mots-clés**

Paulo Freire, bioéthisation de la philosophie, philosophie de l'éducation, oppression, humanisation, êtres vivants non humains, enfance, bioéthique intégrative, pluriperspectivisme