

ENTRE AS ORIGENS E O AGORA: MEMÓRIAS E TRAJETOS DA EDUCAÇÃO POPULAR

BETWEEN THE ORIGINS AND NOW: POPULAR EDUCATION MEMORIES AND PATHS

ENTRE LOS ORÍGENES Y EL AHORA: RECUERDOS Y CAMINOS DE LA EDUCACIÓN POPULAR

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RESUMO

O presente ensaio teve como objetivo principal o de perscrutar quando a “educação” se assina, enfim, “popular”. Para tanto, é esboçado um breve histórico buscando desvelar que a Educação Popular, entre outras palavras-dupla, ganhará o mesmo sentido que acompanhará a obra de Paulo Freire: pensar e praticar a educação como cultura; pensar e praticar a cultura como política; pensar e praticar a política como libertação, como emancipação e, no limite, como revolução. Educadoras e educadores estão sempre se tornando no que devem vir-a-ser. E este tornar-se, que sugere uma mutação, é o que, igualmente, caracteriza o percurso da Educação Popular. Em um mundo em que as ditaduras militares têm sido substituídas por sistemas de colonização e hegemonia impostas pelo difuso poder do capitalismo, diversas teorias e práticas que associam o adjetivo “popular” a outras palavras parecem ser tão atuais e estar tão presentes quanto nos anos 1960.

Palavras-chave: Educação Popular; Paulo Freire; Pedagogia do Oprimido.

ABSTRACT

The main objective of this essay was to investigate when “education” is finally signed as “popular”. A brief history is presented, seeking to reveal that Popular Education, among other double words, will gain the same meaning that will accompany Paulo Freire's work: to think and practice education as culture; to think and practice culture as politics; to think and practice politics as liberation, as emancipation, and ultimately, as revolution. Educators are always becoming what they should become. And this crossing, which suggests a mutation, is what also characterizes the course of Popular Education. In a world in which military dictatorships have been replaced by systems of colonization and hegemony imposed by the diffuse power of capitalism, several theories and practices that associate the adjective “popular” with other words seem to be as current and as present as in the 1960s.

keywords: Popular Education; Paulo Freire; Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

RESUMEN

El presente ensayo tuvo como objetivo principal examinar cuando la educación, finalmente, se firma como “popular”. Es así, como se presenta un breve esbozo histórico que busca revelar que la Educación Popular, entre otras palabras dobles, adquirirá el mismo significado que acompañará la obra de Paulo Freire: pensar y practicar la educación como cultura; pensar y practicar la cultura como política; pensar y practicar la política como liberación, como emancipación y, en sus límites, como revolución. Educadores y educadoras, siempre están convirtiéndose en lo que deben ser. Y este mudar, sugiere una mutación, es lo que también caracteriza el camino de la Educación Popular. En un mundo en que las dictaduras militares han sido reemplazadas por sistemas de colonización y hegemonía impuestas por el difuso poder del capitalismo, distintas teorías y prácticas que asocian el adjetivo “popular” a otras palabras parecen ser tan actuales y estar tan presentes como en los años 1960.

Palabras clave: Paulo Freire; Educación Popular; Pedagogía del Oprimido..

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INTRODUCTION

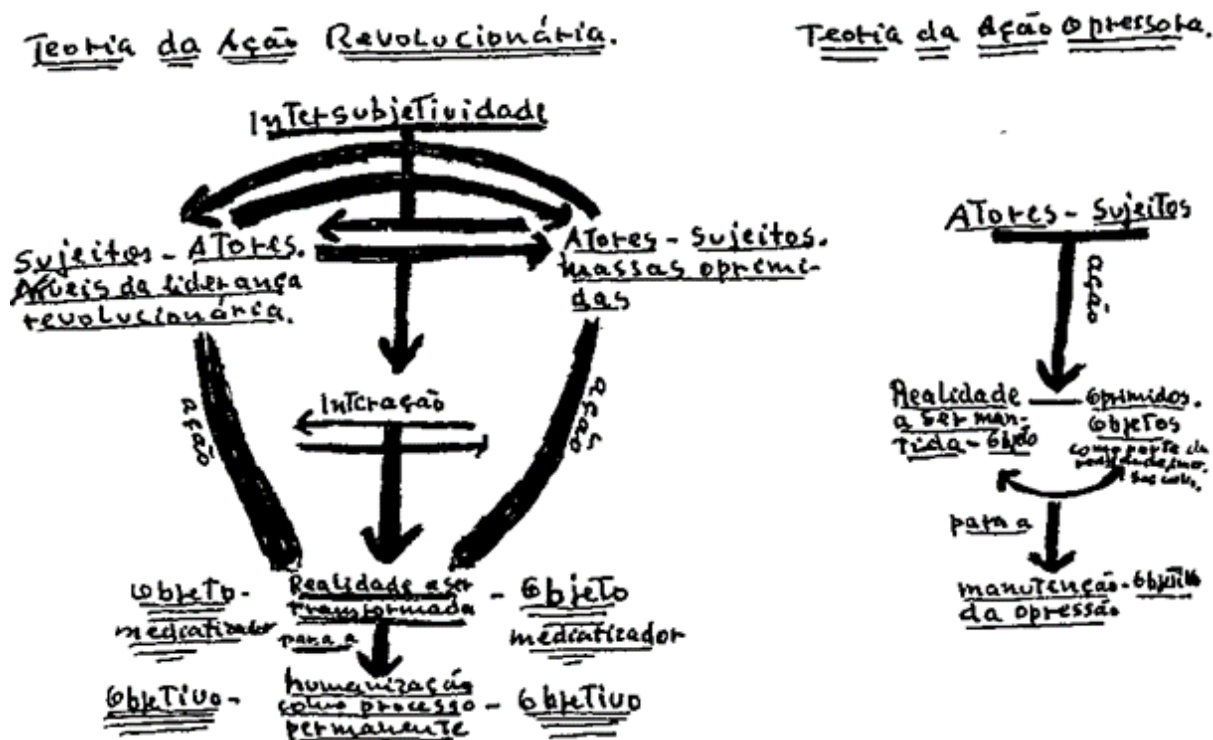
In Brazil, before the expression “popular education” emerged as a collective signature of what participants in Popular Culture Movements (MCPs) closer to pedagogical activities, such as the Base Education Movement (MEB), carried out, “popular” was quite a polyphonic word. All signs indicate that it continues to be the case. “Popular” can be translated as that which, in opposition or distance from what is “erudite,” is something created and experienced by actors and authors from the “popular layers of a society.”

The term “popular layers” would soon be ideologically and politically associated with terms such as: “exploited,” “marginalized,” “oppressed,” “subaltern,” and “people.” Later on, it would be associated with the “popular class” and its relatives: “proletariat,” “worker class,” and “peasantry.” In his first books, Paulo Freire avoided words and conjunctions of words that could contain a more marked political-ideological connotation, such as “working class,” “proletariat,” or “class struggle.” He called his pedagogy “of the oppressed” and to this word, he added others, such as: “subaltern” or “exploited.” He ended up dedicating his book to subjects in the most degraded sphere of social life: “the ragged ones of the Earth.”

Since Paulo Freire's pioneering team, gathered at the Community Extension Service of the then University of Recife, what he feels linked to – as well as all of the militant people “from the sixties” – his work treated “popular culture”, written with initials that are often lowercase, but sometimes capitalized: “Cultura Popular”. In 1962, Paulo and his team organized and coordinated the “First National Meeting of Popular Culture Movements”. The term “popular education” was non-existent or rare, although the expression “popular literacy” was common, primarily around Paulo Freire.

Between the fragile anthropology emerging in Brazil, and the growing reading of Antônio Gramsci and thinkers and activists from the “North of the World”, not properly and orthodoxly “European”, such as Albert Memmi and Franz Fanon (key readings for Paulo Freire), expressions such as “popular knowledge”, “popular art”, “popular theater”, “popular poetry”, and others were quickly widespread. And among the MCPs and the Popular Culture Centers (PCCs) – markedly student and university organizations – these and other double words would gain the same meaning that would accompany Paulo Freire's path: thinking and practicing education as culture; thinking and practicing culture as politics; thinking and practicing politics as liberation, emancipation, and ultimately, revolution.

It is important to highlight that, in the recent handwritten version of the book “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, published by the Paulo Freire Institute (2013), the author dares to draw a double scheme: the “theory of revolutionary action” and the “theory of oppressive action”. This handmade drawing, likely the only one he ever made, was never included in the printed editions. Here it is:



Source: FREIRE, 2018 [1968], p. 322.

Thus, at the dawn of the “sixties,” the idea of “popular culture,” as the different dimensions and variations of cultures specific to the people, tends to be an expression that migrates from Social Sciences to political actions with a popular and emancipatory propensity. Still maintaining a certain double meaning, “popular” could mean what is created, preserved, disseminated, shared, and transformed in different spheres, emerging from the action of different strata of civil society, as opposed to what is created and controlled directly by the power of the State, or by the business sector of society. In this sense, as social scientists propose, a “popular ritual” separates itself from a “church rite,” a “civic ceremony,” or even a traditional city festival.

However, even though peculiar modalities of multiple “popular knowledge” had been recognized - and even studied with growing interest - until then, the polysemy of such “knowledge” was not consistently and actively associated with systematic alternative forms of “endoeducation” or “ethnoeducation.” It was not yet customary among educators to recognize, among peasants and workers, what anthropologists had easily identified among Indigenous peoples, societies, and nations since the end of the 19th century.

It was not common to use the expression “popular education” to describe autogenous processes and systems of heritage knowledge reproduction among people, circles, and peasant communities, until practitioners of a new and active proposal for emancipatory social actions, through some vocation of a “popular culture”, inaugurated literacy and adult education experiences, from a new and increasingly radical emancipatory and counter-hegemonic tendency. The presence of Paulo Freire's ideas and proposals, even before the publication of “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, was key to these processes³.

In previous times, including in the field of education and pedagogy, innovative educators often used the expression “popular education” in different contexts in the history and geography of Latin America, between the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. It was then associated with sociocultural processes of the universal democratization of education and school, which, free, secular, and offered to the “people,” should extend “to all layers of society” knowledge and values of “high culture.”

As Valéria Oliveira de Vasconcelos points out, (2020, p. 497):

This understanding of popular education as the education of the people was consolidated at the same time as the establishment of the Republic in Brazil, starting in 1870. In the fabric of the Republicanism process and the struggles against the enslavement of the Black population in our country, the thread of popular education, until the middle of the 20th century, tacked the construction of Brazilian education, at the heart of which was the “vulgarization of public education”. Thus, it would be up to the elites to form the “mass of free men⁴ for productive work” as citizens of the new Republic

In its new version, and based on a markedly “Freirean” inclination, this first “popular education,” Enlightenment democratic, gains a very distinct and diversely radical (a word dear to Paulo Freire) connotation. Like other social domains of activity of Popular Culture projects, other Popular Education should be carried out as pedagogical work placed at the service of the people through culture. That is, it should be placed on the horizon of something more than just the “instruction,” “training” and “cultural elevation” of people's subjects, within a world under the hegemony of power and the social grammars of capital. It should be carried out based on social projects with political content in the name of counter-regulation. These should, therefore, be openly emancipatory projects. “Emancipatory,” here, means something capable of overcoming and structurally transforming not only the most visible portions of the “oppressors” hegemony, but also the entire social structures of oppression. These projects would lead to popular emancipation, and popularly extended to the entire society, materialized through the complete rupture with the hegemonic culture of capital, and with the society that it creates and reproduces it.

³ Before being published as a book, chapters of “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” were published in a special issue of the magazine *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, from the ecumenical institution *Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina* (ISAL). Other chapters of the same book arrived mimeographed, or copied from the ISAL publication, in Brazil and were secretly read during the military dictatorship.

⁴ After their training in teacher courses and subsequent assumption of teaching positions, women mainly began to play the role of promoting the maintenance of the traditional mentality of a slavery-based society.

WHEN EDUCATION FINALLY DECLARES ITSELF... "POPULAR"

Exiled shortly after the military coup of April 1964, with a brief stay in Bolivia and then a few years between Chile and the United States of America, Paulo Freire wrote by hand his best-known book: "Pedagogy of the Oppressed".⁵ Before its publication, first in Spanish and English and, only years later, in Portuguese, he published two other books. One of them, better known

even cited in several works, not only in the field of pedagogy, was "Education: The Practice of Freedom"⁶ (1967), and the second "Cultural Action for Freedom" (1968). Both in these two extremely important books and in the books he wrote when he was in Geneva and in the World Council of Churches Education Department (working, above all, in Africa and with former colonies of Portugal), Paulo Freire frequently used the term "popular culture", and spoke and wrote using the qualifiers of his education proposal: "liberating", "problematizing", and "humanizing". The expression "Education as a practice of freedom" is also mentioned, but the expression "popular education" would only be used later.

The expression "popular education," already emerging and widespread throughout Latin America between the late 1960s and the early 1970s, is an expression taken to him, and, one should remember, on rare occasions incorporated into his vocabulary.

It is known that, after qualifying his education proposal as "liberating," and then dedicating the pages of his books to it, what Paulo Freire creates – and these words are almost absent in the documents of the pioneering team – is a new pedagogy. It will be of no small importance to observe how he preserves it, requalifying it from one book to the other: pedagogy of the oppressed, pedagogy of hope, pedagogy of autonomy, pedagogy of tolerance, a others.⁷

In Paulo Freire's long chapter in the book "A questão política da educação popular" (The political question of popular education), in his four detailed letters to the "animators of culture circles in São Tomé and Príncipe" (originally published in 1974), when describing in great detail how "culture circles" should be carried out in their awareness-raising, literacy, and post-literacy work, through the action of "animators", Freire does not use the words "pedagogy of the oppressed" or "popular education".⁸

Thus, before the expression "popular education" emerged and became widespread, we found in Brazil and throughout Latin America the following types of education that are important to consider here:

⁵ As previously mentioned, in 2013 the Paulo Freire Institute and other institutions published the book "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (the manuscript) in a facsimile presentation, as written by Paulo Freire during exile. Some important differences between this original and the books published in the United States of America, Latin America, and Brazil should be noted. The handwritten book includes some diagrams drawn by Paulo but not included in the printed version.

⁶ This is a little-known fact. Rubem Alves, when drafting his doctoral dissertation in theology in the USA, quotes passages from Paulo Freire's book on more than two occasions. Rubem Alves' dissertation was called Towards a Theology of Liberation and was written in 1969. At the recommendation of the North American editors, the title was changed to Towards a Theology of Human Hope. It was recently republished in Brazil with its original title. Later, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" became the most closely read education book and incorporated into books from different areas of the world of arts, sciences, and social practices, most likely throughout the world.

⁷ "Pedagogy of Indignation" and others are already posthumous books, organized based on unpublished writings by Paulo Freire by his wife, Ana Maria Freire.

⁸ The "Four Letters to the Animators of Culture Circles in São Tomé and Príncipe", are between pages 136 and 195 of "The Political Question of Popular Education" (BRANDÃO, 1980).

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Adult Education - later called Youth and Adult Education; Permanent Education, which, like the previous one, was directly sponsored by UNESCO;⁹ Base Education – the pedagogical variant of the Base Education Movement, which was increasingly recognized as having.

a “Freirean” affiliation; Liberating Education (Education as a practice of freedom), of Freirean vocation, created by Paulo Freire in opposition to what he called Banking Education¹⁰.

From the second half of the 1960s onwards, military governments imposed an unprecedented dictatorial system on Brazil, and education was one of the most closely monitored areas. Darcy Ribeiro, Paulo Freire, Ernani Maria Fiori, Francisco Wefford, Marcos Arruda, among many other militants in popular causes, inside and outside the scope of culture and popular education, were arrested and/or exiled. A significant fraction of practitioners of some form of insurgency and resistance to the “military regime” became clandestine, and associated themselves with some of the armed movements fighting against the dictatorship. Among them, Popular Action, originating from Catholic Action, should be remembered, which would become the most actively political and resistant fraction of Christian militants. Some of them later became militants of parties and other movements with a clear Marxist identity, such as the Communist Party of Brazil.

Other activists who remained in Brazil associated themselves with new social movements with a popular vocation - from unions born on the ashes of those dismantled by the military regime to associations that intended to carry forward the original proposals of the Popular Culture Movements - throughout the tough times of military control.

Since 1966, a faction of conservative bishops controlled the Board of Directors of the Base Education Movement. The educators of the previous “National Team” were summarily dismissed, and over the years the MEB would lose its original characteristics, recovering them to some extent only after the “political opening” processed in Brazil, with the transition from the military dictatorship to a relative democracy, at the dawn of the 1980s, which was precisely the year when Paulo Freire and several exiled militant educators returned.

PAULO FREIRE: CHRISTIAN, MARXIST, OR WHAT?

In 1972, in its issue 29/30, year X, the journal *Cristianismo y Sociedad* published a long interview with Paulo Freire in the “Documents” section. Freire was already in exile and was interviewed in Europe by an emissary from *Risk* magazine. This interview was later translated into Spanish with the title: Paulo Freire – educación para un despertar de la conciencia (Paulo Freire - education for an

⁹ One of UNESCO's educators during the sixties in Brazil was Pierre Furter. Linked to the Permanent Education proposal, Furter became close to Paulo Freire's northeastern team and was strongly influenced by the then-emerging pedagogical ideas. He left a book written in Portuguese published by Editora Vozes (*Educação e vida*, 1973 - Education and life), and, in the same number 4 of the journal *Estudos Universitários* in which the pioneering studies of Paulo Freire and his team are published, Pierre Furter wrote the article: Literacy and popular culture in the politicization of the Brazilian Northeast.

¹⁰ We strongly recommend reading an old and essential article by Aída Bezerra, an educator at MEB. With the title: “Activities in Popular Education”, which was published in Supplement CEI No. 22 of October 1978. This article is one of those that most faithfully retraces the profile of popular education and outlines a table of variants of education projects then in force in Brazil. Equally important is the study by Beatriz Bebianno Costa: *Para entender uma prática em educação popular* (To Understand a Practice in Popular Education), published in co-edition by Editora Vozes and Nova, in 1981.

awakening of consciousness). In the same publication, the final pages were reserved for the call for “Primer Encuentro Latinoamericano de Cristianos por el Socialismo.”

At one point in his interview, Paulo Freire speaks of an “education for freedom” (p. 76) and a “liberating education”. Two brief passages are transcribed here. Being interviewed in a Christian context, Paulo Freire for the first time publicly associates a liberating education with a theology of liberation.

experiências e compreensões. É por esse motivo que cada indivíduo percebe o mundo da sua maneira e os novos significados e compreensões são atribuídos pela nossa consciência.

That is why I spoke of the archeology of knowledge. Instead of transferring current knowledge, it is necessary to invite consciousness to take an active attitude without which knowledge cannot be created. But this is not happening in primary school... and the same happens at university, which implies a mythology of reality because only a liberating education demystifies reality while domesticating education mythologizes reality, right? (p. 82).¹¹

I believe that mine cannot be the attitude of an empty man waiting to be filled by the word of God. I believe that, if we want to hear this word, I need to be part of the process of man's liberation. For this reason, I believe that theology should be committed to liberating education, and liberating education, to theology (p. 83).¹²

This brief but eloquent passage must lead to a question that, until now, has always been somewhat opaque and obscure: was Paulo Freire a Christian humanist, not always openly and frankly, like countless Christian educators with whom he spoke throughout his life? He, who during the long years of exile in Europe was professionally hired to coordinate the Education Sector of the World Council of Churches, an international Protestant Christian institution?

Likewise, was he a Marxist or a “Marxian,” equally never admitted, even though he had dialogued throughout his life with Marx, Lenin, Gramsci, and other Marxist thinkers, as well as with Marxist and communist revolutionary educators and politicians in Brazil, Latin America, Africa, and Europe?

An old and almost forgotten interview with Paulo Freire perhaps constitutes one of the most enlightening moments on this issue. In 1978, in Geneva, Paulo Freire spoke at length with Lígia Chiappini Moraes Leite, from the University of São Paulo. The entire final part of the interview is transcribed below, considering what is personally revealing about it:

L. (Lígia) – Basically, I want to ask you to what extent you are more Marxist today than you were at the time of Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

P. (Paulo) – Perhaps I could say, repeat, what I have said in certain interviews, which I think expresses my experience well. That is, indisputably I was, in my youth, a peasant and a worker

¹¹ The Portuguese translation maintained the unusual words “desmitoliza” and “mitologiza”, instead of “desmistifica” and “mistifica,” as they seem to be more faithful to Freire’s thinking.

¹² In Portuguese, the word “liberadora” was translated as “libertadora”, because it is known that Paulo Freire used this second word. In different documents in both languages, the two words were found as synonyms.

in my city, moved by my Christian option. Which I do not deny. Once there, the existential drama of the men and women with whom I began to dialogue reminded me of Marx. It is as if the peasants and workers had said to me: "Look, Paulo. Come here, have you heard of Marx?" That is what led me to Marx. And, going to Marx, I was filled with joy, having found Marx among peasants and workers. I mean, a certain type of analysis, like that of the pedagogue that I mentioned at the beginning (of the interview – CRB), in which he drew my attention to the material things in which his consciousness was formed and reformed [...] I began to see a certain original rationality of Marxist thought there in the peasant, illiterate area. Then I started to see: "Wow, this guy is serious!" I do not want to say that I am an "expert" in Marx today, or that I am a Marxist. For the sake of humility. I think it is very serious to say someone is a Marxist. I would rather say that I am trying to become one. And the same happens regarding my Christian option. I am a man looking to become a Christian (LEITE, 1979, p. 75).

This is perhaps the most eloquent and confident moment in which Paulo Freire brought, to his autobiography, a central idea in his theoretical and pedagogical thought: the human being is not; he is becoming what he will become. This becoming, which suggests a mutation, is the most stable thing in life. We are never what we believe we are because we are always becoming what we must become. Freire was not an avowed Christian or a declared Marxist, at a time when a certain open and public "confessional signature" and "ideological identity" were essential among educators. Thus, with confessed humility, he states about being a Marxist: "I am trying to become one." As for being a Christian, Freire states: "I am trying to become one."

Bringing the memory of one of the authors of this article who, as part of a program

to disseminate ideas and practices of Freirean Popular Education throughout Latin America, the Ecumenical Center for Documentation and Information (CEDI), developed a "clandestine" project to disseminate the ideas and proposals of Paulo Freire and his Literacy Method. At this moment, Carlos Rodrigues Brandão was assigned to undertake several trips to Latin American countries not yet subject to military regimes, to materialize this proposal.

Brandão wrote, as support material for his work, a series of small documents mimeographed and shared among educators, especially in the Andean countries. Later, this anthropologist and a review team brought together these pioneering writings in what became the book *Educación popular y proceso de concientización*, published on the initiative of *Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina*, by Editorial Siglo XXI, from Argentina. For safety purposes, the book was named after a Uruguayan theologian, Júlio Barreiro, and several editions were published in Argentina, Mexico, Spain, Portugal, and, ten years later, in Brazil.¹³

The first two paragraphs of the editorial that opens *Cristianismo y Sociedade* (1972, p. 3) contain the following:

¹³ In subsequent study, the results of which are in his book "Latin American Popular Education: History and Ethical, Political and Pedagogical Foundations", educator Oscar Jara Holliday identifies this book as the printed work in the title of which, for the first time, continentally, the expression "Popular Education" appears.

Domesticating education or Education for freedom? What role does education play in our current societies, which are experiencing profound structural transformation processes? Is it an instrument of domination; of education and perpetuation of the system,

- of social control, in short - or must education be one of the most powerful means, not only for popular mobilization, but for creating new societies? Such are the problems we try to address in this issue of CRISTIANISMO Y SOCIEDAD. We do this with the conviction that in the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary processes that our Latin American peoples live, among the many possible forms of popular mobilization that are being used due to the same processes, one of the most powerful instruments to boost them will be provided by an authentic Popular Education (EDITORIAL, 1972, p. 3, original emphasis).

ROOTS AND FOUNDATIONS OF WHAT EMERGED BETWEEN THE 60S AND 80S

There is an essential difference between what we began to call “Popular Education,” at the dawn of the 1970s, and other trends in education and pedagogies, such as, “anthroposophic education”, “anarchist education”, and “Catholic education”, among others. The difference is that these vocations of training people and preserving, or transforming social worlds through educated people, have a clear “signature.” They represent the creation of a person - like Maria Montessori or Rudolf Steiner - they are the fruit of the ideas and work of a uniform and declared collective of people - like anarchist education - derived from an ideology or even a political intention to be carried out also through education, and/or as an explicit and specific pedagogy.

“Popular Education” does not. This will also happen, soon after, with “participatory-action-research.” Having in Paulo Freire and the “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” an authorial subject and a clear and convincing propositional repertoire of principles, precepts, and pedagogical practices, Popular Education emerged from an open and dialogical interaction of people and their social and political collectives.

A simple and timely reading of the footnotes and bibliographical references of the “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” will serve as the most eloquent demonstration of what we remember here. In this and other books by Freire, the circle of base readings involves an interactive polysemy of philosophical, ideological, anthropological, pedagogical, and political foundations. These are plural foundations that, in their interactions, formed the axes of convergence of what became a pioneering “pedagogy of the oppressed” and, later, a derivative of it: “Popular Education.”

Among the choices of basic authors, in Paulo Freire and other popular educators, as well as in the reality of their people and their collectives of origin, what is at the beginning and in the fruitful continuity of Popular Education is an intertwining of humanists secularists (like Freire himself), Christian humanists (like several of Paulo's teammates in the Northeast, in Chile, and in exile in Europe), and Marxist humanists, creators of variants of Marxism of Latin American origin and vocation. Let us remember that the words “man,”¹⁴ “human”, “humanism”, and “humanist” will populate pages and pages

¹⁴ This expression was later replaced with “human beings” or “men and women.”

of "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" and other books by Paulo Freire, as entry points and exit routes for his entire pedagogy.

Between the lines of tangency and interaction of an in-between place (a term now dear to anthropology), or an open border-territory, the "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" was thought and written. This was also where Popular Education emerged and spread across Latin America from the 1970s onwards.

Unlike other epistemological trends in education, Popular Education contributed another important characteristic, which must be emphasized. Since the interval between the second half of the 1960s and the following two decades, everything took place among educators, with no other single "thought guide" appearing in our midst, between Ushuaya and Monterrey, and later between Santiago de Chile and Stockholm. A single other leader person. Any prominent collective.

A political-pedagogical multi-community was then formed with a popular, insurgent, and emancipatory vocation, which, having constituted Paulo Freire as a "companion of the first ideas and practices", managed to generate under the weight and terror of the military regimes in the Southern Cone, under political-police dictatorships in other countries and limited low-intensity democracies, in and among other countries on the continent, what came to be, interactively and inter-dependently, popular culture, Popular Education, participatory-action-research, the theater of the oppressed, new cinema, Latin American protest music, and popular social actions in areas and spheres such as religion, health, architecture. These were initiatives that, in alternative and differentiated ways, sought their most effective places of anchorage and participation in struggle fronts and popular movements.

Direct heir to popular culture, Popular Education is the signature of emancipatory pedagogy practices with a popular tendency from the second half of the 1960s and, above all, from the beginning of the 1970s. Popular culture movements disappeared under the military dictatorship in Brazil. However, they opened wide spaces for the emergence of movements that, unlike MCPs, have their origins among actors from the popular classes in the countryside and the city. Alternatively, they are movements, largely of militant Christian origin, directly linked to popular causes and actions. Through them, Popular Education tends to be, until now, the term used to qualify different alternatives for pedagogical actions with an emancipatory political vocation.

Other previous and subsequent qualifiers will sometimes be used to specifically differentiate a type of popular education, such as "base education", "rural education", and "popular environmental education", and sometimes will be remembered to extend to more comprehensive and final spheres the "popular" of education, as in "humanistic education" and "liberating education." Opting for bold writing, in the style of Eduardo Galeano, we could poetize these lines remembering that: "the horizon is liberating education, the path is popular education, and the steps we take are carried out through the pedagogy of the oppressed."

However, Paulo Freire himself must associate here some words that cross the pages of our writing, in one of the most essential passages of "Pedagogy of the Oppressed."

The pedagogy of the oppressed, as a humanist and liberating pedagogy, will have two distinct moments. The first, in which the oppressed uncover the world of oppression and commit themselves, in practice, to its transformation; and the second in which, once the oppressive reality has been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes the pedagogy of men and women in a process of permanent liberation (FREIRE, 2002, p. 41, emphasis added).

Geneva and Africa, and the other in Brazil, after his return from exile), in some of their writings replaced the expression “popular education” with “education of praxis.” In Marcos Arruda (2009), the proposal presented in the third book of his essential trilogy appears as “education for an economy of love – education of praxis and solidarity economy”. The first chapter of his book is “Education of Praxis – a Path to Autonomy and Solidarity”. The expression “popular education” is entirely replaced with “education of praxis,” and its initial foundations – but not all of them, nor their final proposals – are based on readings of Marx and Gramsci. Likewise, “praxis educator” replaces “popular educator.” For his part, Moacir Gadotti, one of the educators most present in Paulo Freire's life after his return to Brazil, published a book with the title “Pedagogy of Praxis” (1995).

In 1979, ten years after the publication of “Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” the magazine *Educação e Sociedade*, from the Center for Education and Society Studies at the State University of Campinas, published an issue with the title “Pedagogy of the Oppressed – Education of the Colonizer.” Even though his articles are dedicated to dialogue with Paulo Freire, the expression “popular education” appears as a key term.

This occurs in Carlos Rodrigues Brandão's article in the magazine, starting from a trilogy in which one term is opposed to the other two, which complement each other: system education X popular education +class education:

Consequently, the place of popular pedagogical practice, as the symbolic work of intellectual educators at the service of subaltern workers, is a little behind class political practice, and alongside its education, that is, from the point of view of its practice. To avoid being just a more “advanced” form of education in the system, popular education must be a way for intellectuals-educators to participate in class education (BRANDÃO, 1979, p.21)..

From the 1970s onwards, the expression “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” would always be linked in a direct line to Paulo Freire, and the expression “popular education” would tend to become the double word that generates ideas, proposals, and practices originated, also in its greatest and more fruitful measure, in Paulo Freire.

In 1980, the Center for Education and Society Studies (CEDES),¹⁵ published its *Cadernos do CEDES*, no. 1 entitled: “Conceptions and Experiences of Popular Education” (MANFREDI, 1980) with three articles: “Popular Education: Methodological Challenges,” by Maria Sílvia Manfredi, Leila Maria da Silva Blass, and Sônia P. Barros; “Popular Education in a Permanent Education Strategy,” by Alberto

¹⁵ Founded at UNICAMP by Paulo Freire, Moacir Gadotti, Maurício Tragtenberg and Carlos Rodrigues Brandão.

Melo; and “From Fundamental Education to the Fundamentals of Education,” by Carlos Rodrigues Brandão.

In the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, from Paulo Freire's exile to his experiences in African nations, his return to Brazil, and his death, popular education experienced a long period of vertiginous and oscillating expansion and consolidation. As the facts and data from these years are well known; we will only make references to what seems most significant to us.¹⁶

One of the milestones of this educational praxis was the creation, in 1981, of the Popular Education Working Group (GT) of the National Association for Research and Graduate Studies in Education (ANPEd), one of the first to be structured by the organization under the coordination of Osmar Fávero.¹⁷ This GT represents one of the most relevant academic spaces within the national graduate framework and continues to have a strong role of educators and researchers committed to popular education.

In 1982, still in the final years of the military dictatorship in Chile, Marcela Gajardo dared to bring together educators from various corners of Latin America in a large and striking “Taller sobre la Teoría y la Práctica de la Educación Popular”, under the sponsorship (and, in this case, the protection) of the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), the Programa Interdisciplinario de Investigaciones en Educación (PIEE), and the International Development Research Center (IDRC), with the Ford Foundation. In 1983, the Centro Regional de Educación Fundamental para la América Latina (CREFAL), under the sponsorship of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), published the documents and debates of the “Encuentro de Punta de Tralca” in a book-collection that would become a landmark: *Teoría y Práctica de la Educación Popular* (GAJARDO, 1983).

Popular education, participatory-action-research, and liberation theology possibly configure the three neighboring theories and practices that have spread worldwide, from a largely Latin American origin. Probably for the first time, as a whole and among their interactions, they represented a convergent contribution of imaginaries, ideas, and actions that inverted centuries-old relations in the field of insurgent experiences and practices. They helped the world “find true South,” in the expression dear to Paulo Freire, and invited Europeans and North Americans here to dialogue on an equal footing with Nuestra América.

In just a few years they have populated and continue to populate and renew scenarios of pedagogical action through culture and cultural action, such as political pedagogies and critical methodologies of popular emancipation. They are inscribed and written in books and among dialogues of ideas since Paulo Freire, as well as in a diverse and growing contingent of other works published

¹⁶ Due to the limits of this article, further details about some authors will not be provided here. For this reason, it is considered essential to read the invaluable collection organized by Osmar Fávero in the book “Popular Culture Popular Education – Memories of the 60s.” With several documents gathered and divided between the pioneering texts, those from 1961 to 1966, and the later texts, from 1967 to the early 1970s, the work contributes to uncovering forgotten things and putting back some names, facts, and founding achievements “on the stage of history.”

¹⁷ According to Fleuri (2001), ANPEd, founded in 1976, started holding annual meetings in 1978. At the fourth meeting, held in Belo Horizonte (1981), it was proposed that the association be organized into Working Groups (GT), including the Popular Education GT, which met for the first time in 1982, at the 5th annual meeting, in Rio de Janeiro.

since then, in the most diverse means of disseminating ideas and practices, from theory to reports of experiences, innovations effective in the field of education, and a whole new political imaginary, based on popular movements.

These imaginaries are not so much aimed at an academic theoretical contestation with a “deconstructivist” tendency, in the Pierre Bourdieu style, but aimed at a plural offer of alternatives for the solidary construction of knowledge, in the Paulo Freire and Orlando Fals Borda style.

International institutions, such as the UN and UNESCO, today acknowledge popular education as an effective contribution of great and fruitful scope towards achieving goals and purposes that have always been a few steps ahead of their proposals, as in the case of permanent education.

Many years later, in one of the most comprehensive and up-to-date books on the subject, Alfonso Torres Carrillo listed in the bibliography at the end of *Educación Popular – Trayectoria y Actualidad*, fifty-one books, articles, and other documents with the title of “Popular Education” (TORRES, 2008).

From then on, nothing seems to indicate that the innovations introduced by the popular culture movements in Brazil have reached a point of exhaustion. On the contrary, in a world in which military dictatorships have been replaced, in Latin America and worldwide, by systems of colonization and hegemony imposed by the diffuse power of capitalism, several theories and practices that associate the adjective “popular” with other words seem to be as current and as present as they were in the 1960s.

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