LATIN AMERICAN TRADITIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract — Educational and related non-pedagogical issues are generally described and discussed. Implicitly or explicitly, the theology of liberation, educación popular and traditional education tend to perpetuate male/female roles and very often incite violence. Peace education in Latin America should concentrate more on the pathology of the violent man. The so-called ‘weaknesses’ associated with women and their ‘powerlessness’ in Western civilization are precisely those which are absolutely essential to our survival. It is important for women to reject Western patterns of violence and participate actively in finding a viable alternative.


Résumé — Les questions d'éducation et celles, non-pédagogiques, qui s'y rattachent sont décrites et discutées de façon générale dans cet article. Implicitement ou explicitement, la théologie de libération, l'educación popular et l'éducation traditionnelle tendent à perpétuer les rôles homme/femme et très souvent suscite la violence. L'éducation pour la paix en Amérique Latine doit se concentrer davantage sur la pathologie de l'homme violent. Les prétendues ‘faiblesses’ associées à la condition féminine et l’‘impuissance’ de la femme dans la civilisation occidentale sont précisément des qualités indispensables à notre survie. Il importe que les femmes rejettent les formes occidentales de violence et qu‘elles participent activement à la recherche d’une solution viable.

In Search of Manhood

It has often been argued that Latin American education lacks a philosophical foundation (so Puiggrós (1980) and many other Latin American educators) and that this vacuum necessarily produces contradictions and antago-
nisms within the educational system which ultimately defeat its purposes. This lack of philosophy, however, could either be construed as a matter of not having the 'right' philosophy or be seen as the struggle to develop an unquestionable right to be and to exist. Part of this 'struggle to be' may be understood by interpreting the ultimate meaning of the relationships between the Western nations and Latin America, and within Latin America itself.

Somewhat freely following Galtung (1980b), distinctions can be made — with (A) and (a) standing for the political and economic power of the Western nations and Latin America, respectively, and with (B) and (b) representing the rest of the populations, more socially, politically and economically heterogeneous.

(a) understands and imitates the Western Verb. On the other hand, the West has not granted it the category of 'Manhood', assuming that it is composed of 'less-Men', bastard children of Europe — at best still developing — not entitled to claim the name of their own land (since 'American' only refers to an inhabitant of the North, who deserves His title because of His technological and economic advancement) and having no right to use their own language among experts (because Spanish and Portuguese are not acceptable technical/scientific languages in academic circles or journals).

This is the tragedy of identity of the 'poor' rich class of Latin America and its intelligentsia: no matter how wealthy, sophisticated or educated it becomes, no matter how hard it tries, it can never fit within the Philosophy of Progress. Its own existence is living proof of retrogression: how can it ever be forgiven for blending with 'peoples diminished in their humanity . . . (for having become) degenerated by the mixing of its blood with beings that could not justify their humanity . . . For mestizos and Iberians, the men of America, form a sub-humanity, and the expression of this sub-humanity is the underdevelopment in which they live, that reveals their incapacity for progress — because progress lies among Men men, that is, within the nations that conduct the destinies of the world' (Zea, 1980)?

However, the theme of the relationship between the powerful and the powerless is reproduced in the most intricate ways. In Latin America, for example, although (a), having the Western Logos, can understand the meaning of being considered 'sub-Men', it acts as 'Men' within the social structures. This means that the relationship of oppression between (a) and (b) is very similar to that between (A) and (a). Thus, to go 'Indian hunting' cannot be taken as a mere expression of greed (what more can be stolen from American aborigines?) but as a serious sport that may eventually erase proof of the source of the blood that runs in (a)'s veins; it reflects a need to eliminate that physical proximity with the 'real' sub-men which causes (a) to be reckoned 'sub-Men' by the 'Men' and 'Supermen'.