



Book Review

A Pedagogy of Faith: The Theological Vision of Paulo Freire

Andrea F. Emmanuel

New York City Department of Education

Leopando, Irwin. (2017). *A Pedagogy of Faith: The Theological Vision of Paulo Freire*. New York, New York: Bloomsbury Academic. (Original work published 2017). ISBN-978-14725-7925-6 (Hardcover)

A Pedagogy of Faith: The Theological Vision of Paulo Freire offers the compelling argument of Catholic faith as the driving force behind Paulo Freire's consciousness. Irwin Leopando employs extensive research to reveal the theological influences of Freire's thought and praxis by highlighting his response to social and political inequalities within a biographically constructed text. A thorough examination connects Freire's vision with the notion of God as a radical liberator and the necessity for dialogue to combat systems of political and social hegemonies. Leopando, an authority on the subject who worked closely with Ira Shor, co-author of *A Pedagogy of Liberation* with Freire lucidly builds his argument by establishing biblical parallels and gleaning support from Catholic principles, philosophies, and tenets. The work persuasively establishes Freire's liaison with liberation theory through which it connects his idea of the teacher as a political liberator with the exigency of creating the awareness and realization of the "total humanity of the student" (p. 208). This book comes highly recommended and is destined to be a contribution to multiple academic disciplines and the issue of social justice.

Chapter 1, "Paulo Freire's Life and Educational Praxis," explores the evolution of Freire's central ideas from learning the importance of dialogue from his parents to his political activism catalyzed by Catholic influences. The chapter explores the creation of his pedagogy, which encourages dialogue and mutual growth between teacher and student, learning in one's context, and opposition to the government's partiality to economic liberation policies.

Chapter 2, "Freire and the Brazilian Catholic Left Movement," presents the history of the Brazilian Left Catholic Movement and its influences on Freire's pedagogy. The chapter investigates the emergence of his theory of critical consciousness, thereby justifying the need for the marriage of the secular and the sacred to question and confront social and political oppression.

Chapter 3, “Freire and Catholic Theologies of the Person” analyses the direct influences of Jacques Maritain, Emmanuel Mounier, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin on Freire’s ideas and pedagogy. This chapter strongly supports the author’s argument that Freire’s Christian faith fundamentally influenced his central ideas among which: education must foster humanization, dialogue, historical agency, and personal creativity.

Chapter 4, “Freire and Liberation Theology,” reveals the radical change in Freire’s later political thought; he tackles class analysis, correlates it with a Christian-Marxist dialogue, and grounds it in Liberation Theology. The chapter connects Biblical parallels with the fundamental ideas of Liberation Theology and proves the latter’s affirmation of the dialectical relation between faith and the practice of social justice (p. 163)

Chapter 5, “Freire, Neoliberalism, and Integral Pedagogy,” examines Freire’s confrontation of political and economic effects on education and his approach to a “person-centered and humanizing pedagogy” (p 218). This section grounds his life’s work as a moral commitment.

“Final Thoughts,” the afterword reflects the embodiment of Freire’s vision as a model and guide—the ultimate pedagogy—for education and social justice, as it catalogs the necessary principles of an educational praxis to confront socio-political and other structures of injustice. It establishes Freire’s educational practice as adhering to the whole person, thereby opposing all systems that reduce human beings to any single facet of their existence (p 218).

A Pedagogy of Faith: The Theological Vision of Paulo Freire is set to become a staple in the field of education on the merit of its contributions to relational teaching. It is an asset to educators and agents of social justice as it offers a faith propelled pedagogy for the humanization of the oppressed. It is a fount for research indelibly imprinting the importance of balance between the sacred and the secular to achieve an end of agency, creativity, and historical change. There are some minor typographical errors. However, they do not detract from the work. Irwin Leopando accomplishes his overarching goal: Paulo Freire’s vision, theory, and practice were greatly influenced by his Catholic faith. It is his faith that influenced his vision of conscientization, dialogue, and balance among others, which he saw as true liberation that frees both the oppressed and the oppressor.



Andrea F. Emmanuel is an instructor with the New York City Department of Education. She received a Bachelor’s degree from the City University of New York—Hunter College in English, English Literature and Criticism. Andrea anticipates a master’s degree in Adult Education. She is also a freelance writer and poet.