

Paulo Friere - the radical Brazilian educator wrote **Pedagogy of the Opressed** and **Cultural Action for Freedom**. He was able to teach Brazilian peasants to read and write within 30 days! He would use key-words which had deep emotive meaning in the lives of poor people. Through a process of action - reflection the poor peasants not only learnt how to read and write but their level of political consciousness grew remarkably.

In the exercises listed below - the oppressed comment on some pictures, and alongwith a dialogue their understanding grows.

### **FIRST SITUATION**



#### **Man In The World And With The World, Nature And Culture**

Through the discussion of this situation-man as a being of relationships - the participants arrive at the distinction between two worlds: that of nature and that of culture. They perceive the normal situation of man as a being in the world and with the world, as a creative and re-creative being who, through work, constantly alters reality. By means of simple questions, such as, “Who made the well? Why did he do it? How did he do it? When?” which are repeated with regard to the other “elements” of the situation, two basic concepts emerge: that of *necessity* and that of *work*; and culture becomes explicit on a primary level, that of subsistence. The man made the well because he needed water. And he did it because, relating to the world, he made the latter the object of his knowledge. By work, he submitted the world to a process of transformation. Thus, he made the house, his clothes his work tools. From that point, one discusses, with the group, in obviously simple but critically objective terms, the relations among men, which unlike those discussed previously cannot be either of domination or transformation because they are relations among Subjects.

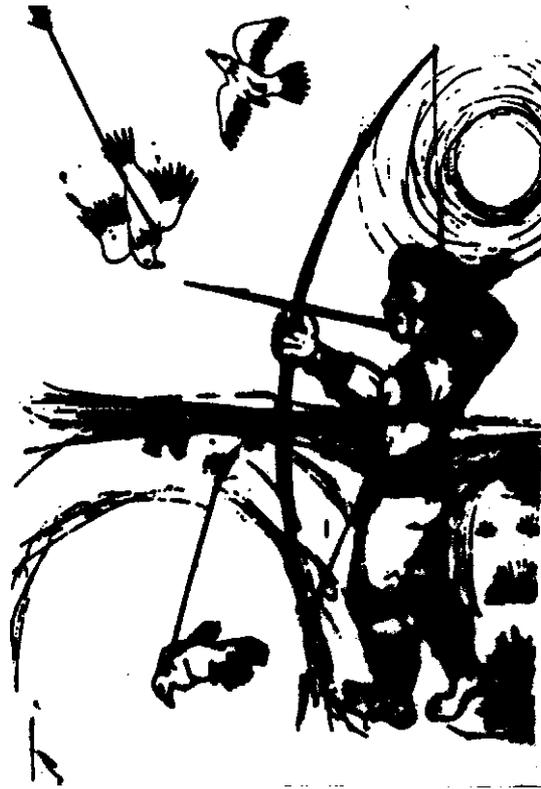
## SECOND SITUATION



### **Dialogue Mediated By Nature**

In the first situation, we reached the analysis of relationships among men, which, because they are relations among Subjects, cannot be those of domination. Now, confronted by this second situation, the group is motivated to analyze dialogue, interpersonal communication, the encounter of consciousness; motivated to analyze the mediation of the world - as transformed and humanized by men - in this communication; motivated to analyze the loving, humble, hopeful, critical, and creative foundation of dialogue.

### THIRD SITUATION



#### Unlettered Hunter

The debate it initiated by distinguishing in this situation. What belongs to nature and what belongs to culture. “Culture in this picture,” the participants say, “it the bow, it the arrow, it is the feathers the Indian wears.” And when they are asked if the feathers are not nature, they always answer, “The feathers are nature, while they are on the bird. After man kills the bird, takes the feathers, and transforms them with work, they are not nature any longer. They are culture.” (I had the opportunity to hear these reply innumerable times, in various regions of the country.) By distinguishing the historical cultural period of the hunter from their own, the participants arrive at the perception of what constitutes an unlettered culture. They discover that what man prolongs his arms five to ten yards by making in implement and therefore no longer needs to catch his prey with his hands, he has created culture. By transferring not only the use of the implement, but also the incipient technology of its manufacture, to younger generations, he has created education. The participants discuss how education occurs in an unlettered culture, where one cannot properly speak of illiterates. They then perceive immediately that to be illiterate is to belong to an unlettered culture and to fail to dominate the technology of reading and writing. For some, this perception is dramatic.

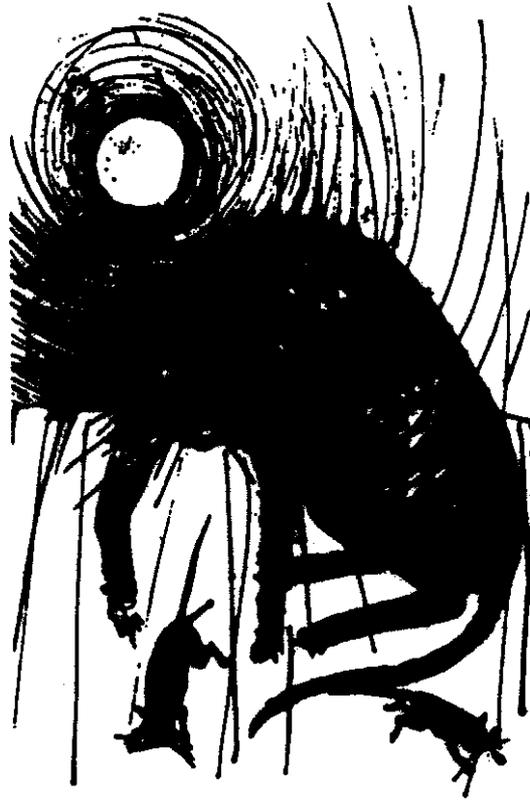
## FOURTH SITUATION



### Lettered Hunter (Lettered Culture)

When this situation it projected, the participants identify the hunter as a man of their culture, although he may be illiterate. They discuss the technological advance represented by the rifle as compared with the bow end arrow. They analyze man's increasing opportunity, because of his work and hit creative spirit, to transform the world. They discuss the fact that this transformation, however, has meaning only to the extent that it contributes to the humanization of man, and is employed toward his liberation. They finally analyze the implications of education for development.

## FIFTH SITUATION



### The Hunter And The Cat

With this situation, the participants discuss the fundamental aspects, which characterize the different forms of being in the world - those of men and of animals. They discuss man as being who not only knows, but knows that he knows, as a conscious being (*corpo consciente*) in the world; as a consciousness which in the process of becoming an authentic person emerges reflective and intent upon the world.

In regard to the proceeding series, I will never forget an illiterate from Brasillia who affirmed, with absolute self-confidence, “Of these three, only two are hunters - the two men. They are hunters because they make culture before and after they hunt.” (He failed only to say that they made culture while they hunted.) “The third, the cat, does not make culture, either before or after the ‘hunt’. He is not a hunter, he is a pursuer.” By making this subtle distinction between hunting and pursuing, this man grasped the fundamental point; the creation of culture.

The debate of these situations produced a wealth of observations about men and animals, about creative power, freedom, intelligence, instinct, education, and training.

## SIXTH SITUATION



### **Man Transforms The Material Of Nature By His Work**

“What do we see here? What are the men doing?” the coordinator asks. “They are working with clay,” all the participants answer. “They are changing the materials of nature with work,” many answer.

After a series of analyzes of work (Some participants even speak of the “pleasure of making beautiful things,” as did one man from Brasillia), the coordinator asks whether the work represented in the situation will result in an object of culture. They answer yes:”A vase,” “A jug,” “A pot,” etc.

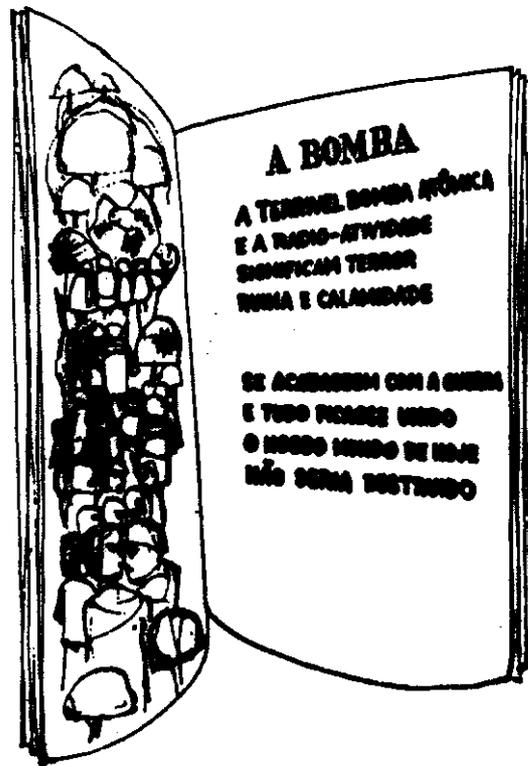
## SEVENTH SITUATION



### **A Vase, The Product Of Man's Work Upon The Material Of Nature**

During a discussion of this situation in a Culture Circle of Recife, I was moved to hear a woman say with emotion, "I make culture. I know how to make that." Many participants, referring to the flowers in the vase, say, "As flowers, they are nature. As decoration, they are culture." This aesthetic dimension of the product, which in a sense had been awakened from the beginning, is now reinforced. This aspect will be discussed fully in the following situation, when culture is analyzed on the level of spiritual necessity.

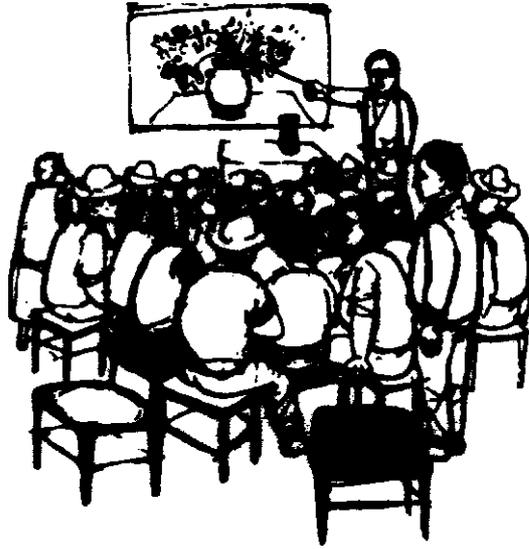
## EIGHTH SITUATION



### Poetry

First the coordinator reads, slowly, the text, which has been projected. “This is a poem,” everyone usually says. The participants describe the poem as popular, saying that its author is a simple man of the people. They discuss whether or not the poem is culture. “It is culture, just as the vase is,” they say, “but it is different from the vase.” Through the discussion they perceive, in critical terms, that poetic expression whose material is not the same, responds to a different necessity. After discussing aspects of popular and erudite artistic expression in various fields, the coordinator rereads the text and submits it to a group discussion.

## NINTH SITUATION



### Patterns Of Behavior

In this situation, we wish to analyze patterns of behavior as a cultural manifestation, in order subsequently to discuss resistance to change.

The picture presents a *gaucho* from the south of Brazil and a cowboy from the Brazilian northeast, each dressed in his customary fashion. Starting with the subject of their clothing, the discussion moves on to some of their forms of behavior. Once, in a Culture Circle in the south of Brazil, I heard the following: “We see here traditions of two Brazilian regions - the south and the northeast. Traditions of a need to dress like that - one with warm clothing. Sometimes the need passes but the tradition goes on.”

## TENTH SITUATION



### **A Culture Circle In Action - Synthesis Of The Previous Discussion**

On seeing this situation, the Culture Circle participants easily identify themselves. They discuss culture as a systematic acquisition of knowledge, and also the democratization of culture within the general context of fundamental democratization of culture,” one of these anonymous illiterate teachers once said, “has to start from what we are and what we do as a people, not from what some people think and want for us.” In addition to discussing culture and its democratization, the participants analyze the functioning of a Culture Circle, its dynamic significance the creative power of dialogue and the clarification of consciousness.

The preceding situations are discussed in two sessions, strongly motivating the group to begin on the third night their literacy program, which they now see as a key to written communication.

Literacy makes sense only in these terms, as the consequence of men’s beginning to reflect about their own capacity for reflection, about the world, about their position in world, about their work, about their power to transform the world, about the encounter of consciousness - about literacy itself, which thereby ceases to be something external and becomes a part of them, comes as a creation from within them. I can see validity only in a literacy programme in which men understand words in their true significance - as a force to transform the world. As illiterate men discover the relativity of ignorance and of wisdom, they destroy one of the myths by which false elite’s have manipulated them. Learning to read and write has meaning in that, by requiring men to reflect about themselves and about the world they are in and with, it makes them discover that the world is also theirs, that their work is not the price they pay for being men but rather a way of loving - and of helping world to be a better place.