**Pedagogy of the Oppressed - Paulo Friere, Summary (From: SuperSummary)**

Paolo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* develops a theory of education fitted to the needs of the disenfranchised and marginalized members of capitalist societies. Combining educational and political philosophy, the book offers an analysis of oppression and a theory of liberation. Freire believes that traditional education serves to support the dominance of the powerful within society and thereby maintain the powerful’s social, political, and economic *status quo*. To overcome the oppression endemic to an exploitative society, education must be remade to inspire and enable the oppressed in their struggle for liberation. This new style of education focuses on consciousness-raising, dialogue, and collaboration between teacher and student in the effort to achieve greater humanization for all.

For Freire, education is political and functions either to preserve the current social order or to transform it.  Freire’s own commitment to this struggle developed through years of teaching literacy to Brazilian and Chilean peasants and laborers. His efforts at educational and political reform resulted in a brief period of imprisonment followed exile from his native Brazil for fifteen years.

*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*begins with a preface in which Freire asserts the importance of consciousness-raising, or *conscientização*, as the means enabling the oppressed to recognize their oppression and commit to the effort to overcome it, taking full responsibility for themselves in the struggle for liberation. He addresses the “fear of freedom,” which inhibits the oppressed from assuming this responsibility. He also cautions against the dangers of sectarianism, which can undermine the revolutionary purpose as well as serve as a refuge for the committed conservative.

The struggle for liberation is a struggle to reclaim our humanity. By objectifying and debilitating the oppressed, oppression dehumanizes them as well as their oppressor. Conditioned by oppression to mistrust and undervalue themselves, the oppressed languish, submerged in the concrete reality of their oppression, thereby developing a false consciousness that is politically immobilizing.

Freire claims, however, that humanization is the vocation of human beings. We are challenged to fully develop our humanity and this entails the exercise of free will in creating ourselves and transforming the world through our labor. The historical task of the oppressed is to liberate themselves and their oppressors by becoming subjects in the historical process and surmounting the social institution of domination. The pedagogy of the oppressed, therefore, aims to overcome the false consciousness of the dispossessed by penetrating the “culture of silence” that afflicts them, and unveiling the structures and causes of oppression.

Freire attacks traditional education, which he calls the “banking” method. In this form of education, the teacher “deposits” information in the student, who serves as a passive receptacle for knowledge. A strict hierarchy prevails between the authoritarian teacher who possesses knowledge and the receptive student who is presumed by the educational system to be ignorant. By denying creativity and agency to the student, this type of education serves to disempower and indoctrinate the student in the ideology of the dominant elite, adapting her to the oppressive social order.

Problem-posing education, by contrast, encourages students to think and collaborate with their teachers in the process of acquiring knowledge. A humanist form of education, it relies on dialogue, which requires love, humility, faith, and hope, and results in the mutual trust of educator and student. These qualities enable problem-posing education to be an instrument of social transformation. The task of the educator is to facilitate the development of critical awareness among the oppressed, focusing on the concrete conditions of their existence and posing these as problems to the students. In dialogue, teacher and students share in the act of creating knowledge in which each teaches the other. This process of education leads to the development of the revolutionary praxis of the oppressed, in which critical reflection and liberatory action cooperate and influence each other in the emancipatory struggle.

Freire provides an example of how teachers can undertake problem-posing education with a group of people. Observing the population from a sociological and anthropological viewpoint, educators work with the people to identify “themes” that reflect the conditions of their existence—their hopes, beliefs, fears, and challenges. These themes are re-presented to the group in codified form, using pictures, films, audio recordings and other media to stimulate discussion of their significance. The aim is to enable the public to discover the relation of these themes as dimensions of a larger totality of oppression, and recognize the contradictions underlying the social structure of domination.

Freire concludes by offering a theory of revolutionary action that counters the oppressor’s cultural tactics to preserve his dominance. The oppressor attempts to dominate the oppressed through conquest, division, manipulation and cultural invasion. The revolutionary responds to these “antidialogical” forms of action with “dialogical” forms: cooperation, unification, organization, and cultural synthesis, all of which reflect the communion of the revolutionary leadership with the oppressed in the joint struggle for liberation.

The "Banking" concept (from "The Idea of the “Banking Concept in Education”, Matthew Rose, 2017)

 The “banking” concept of education is a method of teaching and learning where the students simply store the information relayed to them by the teacher. In a “banking” type of environment, a classroom is structured in a way that the primary duty of students is to remember and accurately recall the information provided by the instructor. They are not asked to participate in any other way, and simply absorb the information. In this type of approach, the world is seen as static and unchangeable, and students are simply supposed to fit into it as it is. The prevalence of the banking concept within most educational systems prevents students from developing skills that make themselves fair-minded critical thinkers and continues to promote long-standing biases within society.

In contrast to the Banking Concept in Education, Freire proposes the Problem Solving Method in Education. This method is concerned with the task of “presenting reality as it truly is” and not glossing over the truth. Additionally, it holds two-way learning as essential in all education and treats dialogue as a vital part to successful education. The Problem Solving Method in Education allows students to become critical thinkers, emphasizes scholarly inquiry and fosters action upon reality. Most importantly, the Problem Solving Method in education allows students the opportunity to break free of the oppressive, authoritarian nature of the traditional education dynamic.