

Intervention bioethics and pedagogy for liberation: possible approaches

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Abstract

The text analyzes an approximation between intervention bioethics – theoretical approach proposed in the Cátedra Unesco de Bioética at the University of Brasília – and the pedagogy for liberation, an emancipatory theory which was developed by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. These perspectives were selected due to the fact that they intend to act in social inequalities contexts, committed to the socio-political dimensions in the fields of bioethics and ethics, respectively. When assuming the intransigent defense of vulnerable, “oppressed” or excluded people, the ethical debate is created, denouncing inequalities and advocating a world with better quality of life and social justice. When highlighting the ethical/political character which intersects both theories, the study concludes that they point to solidarity as a mobilization and intervention tool, what enables their joint use as a theoretic-methodological tool in the fight for the respect to the human being dignity and to the universal human rights.

Key words: Bioethics. Liberty. Human rights. Teaching. Autonomy.

Resumo

Bioética de intervenção e pedagogia da libertação: aproximações possíveis

O texto analisa uma aproximação entre a bioética de intervenção – abordagem teórica proposta na Cátedra Unesco de Bioética da Universidade de Brasília – e a pedagogia da libertação, teoria emancipadora desenvolvida pelo educador brasileiro Paulo Freire. Essas perspectivas foram selecionadas porque se propõem a atuar em contextos de desigualdade social, comprometidas com as dimensões sociopolíticas nos campos da bioética e da ética, respectivamente. Ao assumir a defesa intransigente das populações vulneráveis, “oprimidas” ou excluídas, instrumentalizam o debate ético, denunciando as desigualdades e defendendo um mundo com mais qualidade de vida e justiça social. Ao ressaltar o caráter ético-político que perpassa as duas teorias, o estudo conclui que ambas apontam a solidariedade como veículo de intervenção e mobilização, o que possibilita sua utilização conjunta e somatória como ferramenta teórico-metodológica na luta pelo respeito à dignidade humana e aos direitos humanos universais.

Palavras-chave: Bioética. Liberdade. Direitos humanos. Ensino. Autonomia.

Resumen

Bioética de intervención y pedagogia de la liberación: aproximaciones posibles

El artículo analiza una aproximación de bioética de intervención - enfoque teórico propuesto en la Cátedra Unesco de Bioética de la Universidad de Brasília - y la pedagogía de la liberación, teoría emancipadora desarrollada por el educador brasileño Paulo Freire. Estas perspectivas han sido seleccionadas porque proponen actuar en contextos de desigualdad social, comprometidas con las dimensiones sociopolíticas en los ámbitos de la bioética y de la ética, respectivamente. Al tomar la defensa intransigente de las poblaciones vulnerables, “oprimidas” o excluidas, instrumentalizan el debate ético, denunciando las desigualdades y defendiendo un mundo con más calidad de vida y justicia social. Al resaltar el carácter ético/político que permea las dos teorías, el estudio concluye que ambas muestran la solidaridad como un vehículo para la intervención y la movilización, lo que permite su uso conjunto y en los totales como herramienta teórica y metodológica en la lucha por el respeto a la dignidad humana y a los derechos humanos universales.

Palabras-clave: Bioética. Libertad. Derechos humanos. Enseñanza. Autonomía.

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The homologation of the *Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights* (UDHR) of the United Nations for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) has, in 2005 ¹, significantly expanded the scope of bioethics. This conceptual shift was reflected by the inclusion, in the body of the Declaration, several principles that allowed this inter and trans-disciplinary territory of knowledge transcend the limits that were until then preferentially targeted to biomedical and biotechnological area ². The UDHR has been receiving increased international recognition, despite some countries still resist to its formulation. It represents a non-binding normative document, although it has no force of law, has been showing potential to function as a useful instrument to guide States in building their laws in this field ³.

With the referred Declaration on bioethics, it was emphasized the possibility of building a critical, pluralistic bioethics, specifically committed to the most vulnerable people - the social vulnerable - often situated on the margins of the productive system. From this new context, the perspective is that bioethics becomes to be set as a knowledge linked to the struggles for social justice and, thereby, more committed to the defense of better quality of life for those in need. In order to rescue a bioethics admittedly political, this study gives visibility to the theoretical approach built on the Unesco's Cathedra of Bioethics at the University of Brasilia, the intervention bioethics (IB) ⁴⁻⁶, drawing a parallel between this theory and the ideas developed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, which, for the purposes of this study, were grouped under the name of pedagogy for liberation (PL) ⁷⁻⁹.

The perspective is to analyze the possible convergences between the theories in question aiming, on the one hand, to reflect on how much the thinking of Freire ⁷⁻⁹ has to contribute to a better comprehension of the basic principles of social ethics, committed to finding solutions for problems affecting the social reality of the social helpless or "oppressed." On the other hand, to discuss, from the perspective of Freire, bioethics, as applied ethics, would have the possibility to go beyond the limits set by the biomedical and biotechnological knowledges, representing the protagonist in the construction of a more equal world, which can provide more dignity for human beings who live in conditions of inaccessibility to their most basic rights. In practice, it is about investing in the possibility of joint use of the principles of both theories as tools in the struggle for the respect of plurality, dignity and of universal human rights and the consequent enhancement of citizenship and democracy.

The critical and solidarity nature of the intervention bioethics

The IB, worked since the 1990s by the then Center for Studies and Research in Bioethics (and from 2004, Unesco's Cathedra of Bioethics at the University of Brasilia), became internationally known from the Sixth World Congress of Bioethics, held in 2002, in Brasilia ¹⁰. Distinguished as the theme of the thematic conference in the official opening of the event, it was then demonstrated more systematically, from a particular view of the southern countries, the insufficiency (and even indifference...) of the traditional bioethics with respect to the growing inequalities and social inequities present in the contemporary world: (...) *social wealth remains in the hands of a few, continues growing depredation of the environment and population majorities follow far the benefits of development* ¹¹.

The IB, unlike the traditional bioethics, is committed to contribute for a radical change in this scenario. By politicizing its discourse, it presents as goal the pursuit of building public spaces in which are discussed alternatives to situations caused by social inequality, such as extreme poverty, unemployment, hunger, illiteracy, the precariousness of urban mobility, health ,education, etc. It is evident, therefore, that the IB believes in the possibility of constructing collectively a more just and egalitarian society, guided by the establishment of solitary relations, non discriminatory, in order to ensure better conditions for survival, in a world where people have guaranteed the right to quality of life ¹⁰.

Concretely, towards the morally unacceptable inequities, which greatly diminish life chances of the poorest ¹², the IB advocates equal actions to the public and public sector, capable of responding to the need for social justice, contemplating the fundamental rights to most of people, as long as possible and that result in the best outcomes ¹³. In this sense, for the IB, equity is the starting point for the construction of egalitarian societies ¹⁴, democratic and free, as it favors the recognition of differences and enables people to considered according to their contexts and real needs.

In synthesis, the IB emerges from nonconformity and indignation towards the inequalities that affect poor countries, with the objective of seeking social justice, in the form of a permanent combat against the problems that impair the well-living ¹⁵ of their populations, especially the Brazilian population and other Latin American countries. Developing a fundamentally critical and pluralistic study, the IB

deals with emergent situations arising from the rapid biotechnoscientific development in recent years (new reproductive technologies, genomics, transplantation of organs and tissues), but especially debates persistent recurring situations directly linked to the structural conditions that remain in human societies since Antiquity, such as social exclusion, poverty, all forms of discrimination, abortion, euthanasia, etc.⁵

The proposal of IB implies a reinterpretation of the Potterian bioethics, including in its reflections and discussions with society issues as: human rights, citizenship, participation, social and economic inequities; public accountability in health; solidarity, empowerment, emancipation, etc. In other words, this is an ethical approach that goes beyond the current moral conflicts, commonly reported among health professionals and patients, or among researchers and research subjects, calling attention to the reality of the nations where the majority of population continues fighting for minimum conditions for survival, where power and incomes are concentrated in the hands of a small elite^{4,5}.

With this, the IB seeks to provide service to citizens of the peripheral countries into the globalized world, since it presents itself as an alternative to towards *some bioethics that are depoliticized, horizontal, distant from reality, deliberately neutral and aseptic*¹⁶ that, by not taking into account reality, contribute to the maintenance of the existing *status quo* on behalf of the exclusive interests of “developed lives” from central countries; civilized lives and, therefore, allowed to think for others, using their own ethical and moral imperialists and globalizing criteria¹⁷. In other words, the IB calls attention to the need for a critique, considering the fact that the peripheral countries’ political decisions are affected by the economic fundamentalism generated by a disordered and unilateral globalization; the imposed market ethics ultimately determines that poor populations remain in poverty and in social discrimination, while developed countries keep strengthening economically and politically¹⁸.

The proposal of IB represents *a macro view of bioethics, expanded and committed to social, more critical, politicized and interventionist, with the aim of reducing the observed disparities*¹⁹. Although the hegemonic theory of bioethics – denominated principlism – has strengths as its practicality and effectiveness for evaluating the application of criteria in clinical research and in the relation professional-patient does not encourage or favor reflections on key issues, such as those involving the participation of

the State, setting priorities related to the implementation and management of resources in health, education and security – in a democratic, organic and critical manner⁵.

The proposal of IB is configured as an ethical alternative to think about social problems, little treated by the traditional bioethics by that time. Thus, by observing the superficial character of the application of the four principles to ensure respect for the fundamental rights of the poorest populations, Potter’s bioethics is approximated with the expectation of developing it from a current ecological perspective, without losing sight the need to promote liberation and protection of Latin America; it is about an intercultural bioethics, which favors social debates in the search for solutions to concrete problems; finally, an institutional and political ethics, able to critically think about poverty, justice, equity in health that, thereby, transcends clinical bioethics²⁰.

The fact is that, after four decades of principlist model’s dominance, the IB emerges as one of the currents of the new Latin American bioethics, offering important contributions in the search for solutions to the persistent problems that affect developing countries²¹. In the perspective of IB, the theory of principles is also insufficient for: *a) contextualized analysis of conflicts that require certain flexibility for a given cultural appropriateness; b) coping with persistent bioethical macro problems, daily experienced by the majority of Latin American countries, with highly significant levels of exclusion*²². Based on this, it proposes the search for more appropriate responses to problems and conflicts, addressing them also in a social and political perspective.

The IB has as its main focus the macro problems directly related to persistent bioethical issues that both harm the populations from the peripheral to the central globalized world and emerges, in a way, to fill the gap left by the uncritical assimilation of the principlist checklist, considering that principlism – as theory and practice – does not give the appropriate attention and adjustment to different cultural, social and economic realities of poor countries from the Southern part of the planet. From the anti-hegemonic epistemological foundation of IB, this debate, hitherto excluded from the international agenda of bioethics, begins to integrate discussions of global scientific events, being gradually incorporated into studies and researches, especially by Latin American bioethicists. Functional categories differently present on the agenda until then – such as responsibility, solidarity, commitment, participation, among others – have become part of the academic

context in the perspective of consolidating a committed bioethics to the weakest, that may prioritize the collective interests at the expense of particular specific expectations and that may be concerned to the environmental and planetary balance ⁵.

Besides the issues already mentioned, the IB is also concerned about solidarity, once it is an important element of social mobilization. In this sense, it is included in its theoretical foundation the named “critical solidarity” ²³⁻²⁵ as a secondary tool to support the construction of social justice to human life in its broadest sense. The critical solidarity aims to contribute on building political and social transformation based on, among other forms, the organic volunteering in the Gramscian perspective, oriented towards alterity and specially concerned with the other ²⁵. The actions proposed by this additional critical aspect of IB occurs by the concrete action of organized groups and *must constitute itself a social body with its own identity, specific theoretical reference and spaces of actions and interventions that radically privilege the respect for moral pluralism and the construction of inclusive social transformations* ²⁶.

Such path incorporates the struggle for increasing the participation of the largest possible number of individuals and groups in processes of decision-making, acutely problematizing traditional forms of deciding politically. The bases of volunteering proposed by IB are directly committed to the proposal of a triple action, focused on the civil, political and social dimensions of groups and institutions. One of its sources of inspiration is precisely the critical solidarity that, situated on the intrinsic relations of people’s social life, comprises of transformation proposals from both the uninterested and contumacious seen in the traditional volunteer groups regarding the discourse and political practices for social mobilization that are established by the movements of protest and confrontation, when necessary ¹⁷.

The projects outlined by organic volunteering are developed from militant practices, supportive, critical, self-critical and transformative of social reality. For the IB, the organic volunteer groups define their actions in the fields of justice, human rights, the permanent mobilization and political struggle; without losing sight of the need to essentially dialogical and socially engaged practices. This is how the IB reinforces its relationship with a critical solidarity, based on what its creators call “supportive consequentialism” ¹⁷.

Therefore, IB assumes that issues related to quality of life, ethics and politics cannot be treated in the same manner in every part of the world,

regardless the contexts. Such questions, when derived from peripheral countries, suffering most severely with inequality, poverty and violence, cannot be treated with the same strategies and tools used by central countries ⁵. Thus, the IB fulfills a political, solidarity and public role as becomes more noticeable the daily lives of people in need, bringing into discussion the health, social and environmental issues, until then minimized by the “veil of ignorance” of some, and not identified by the indifference or blindness of others ²⁷.

The universal ethics in the pedagogy for liberation

The universal human ethics, theoretical tool of PL, proposed by Paulo Freire ^{7,8}, present in all his writings and especially in his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, from 1970, appears as an organic speech, outraged with injustice situations that permeate the reality of the poor and socially disadvantaged populations in the world. In this sense, the PL calls the oppressed to become aware of extreme situations given by the excluding reality and struggle with hope and boldness ²⁸ against injustices, assuming the ongoing search for achieving autonomy and freedom.

According to Freire, the human condition endows individuals with ethical-political capacity to intervene into the world, seeking to remake it, reinvent it in every moment. Humans are thus beings of untested feasibility ⁷, once they are continuously unfinished, opened to the possibility of renewal and transformation, and therefore more able to fight for more humanity. With this, the author states his belief in humanity and in the struggle for a better reality for all - in which people are not impeded from fully develop, improving their skills or potentialities ²⁹; a world where there is no room for the exploitation, discrimination and violence ⁷⁻⁹.

It is evident that the PL has a strongly supportive character, towards the need to repair injustices of the world, ensuring to all humans, regardless of color, nationality, sex, etc., the right to *be more* ⁹. Freire’s ethics *condemns exploitation of labor power (...) deceive the unwary, strike the weak and helpless, bury the dream and utopia (...) ethics that knows affronted in discriminatory expressions of race, gender, class* ³⁰ and that, therefore refuses any situation of violence that will tackle the fundamental human rights and human dignity. However, this ethics proposed by Freire will not be granted. In the author’s words, *freedom does not receive a gift, it is*

well that the struggle is enriched by him, in constant search (...) ³¹.

It will be delegated to the impaired by the capitalist logic the task of fighting, individually and collectively, to change the situation dictated by the market's oppressive rules – currently more strengthened by the prevalence of the dominant ideology of globalization. Freire, concerned about the injustices that tend to perpetuate and about the possibility of a homogeneous speech that could paralyze men and women, undermining their chances of struggle and freedom, severely criticizes the technologized world: *the discourse of globalization that speaks of ethics (...) looks disguise it [market ethics] is stealing the wealth of the few and the verticalization of poverty and misery of 32 million* ³². For him, going against the insanity of the logic dictated by globalizing capitalism, more than a right, it is a duty, an ethical commitment to fight for the liberation of all historical conditions of negation of rights of the world's tattered ³³.

It is noteworthy that the first step in the pursuit of freedom is that people realize the reality surrounding them, becoming consciousness of their conditions as human beings in the world. But the awareness, although being the starting point, is not enough. It is essential that the oppressed, from the knowledge of the limits imposed by oppression, do not allow such limitations to be imposed as something unchangeable, impossible to be modified ⁷. In Freire's perspective of PL ⁷⁻⁹, the rescue of universal human values interests all; which means that the achievement of freedom for the oppressed, ensuring them the conditions of humanization, will also give back the lost dignity to those in the position of oppressors. For Freire, there is no victory or benefit, from the human point of view, in those who oppress: by preventing others from being more, the oppressors also put themselves in a position of being less ^{8,9}, in an inauthentic condition of no freedom.

Thus, the dehumanization of those who are on the margins of the capitalist system ²⁸, that is not only verified in them, due to their human potential stolen, but also, however differently, in those who steal, is the pure distortion of the vocation to *be more*. Dehumanization is a possible distortion in history, but never a historical vocation ^{7,8}. The defense of Freire, in this sense, is a joint struggle to overcome the "limit situations" in which people humanize, while they build, individually and collectively, new meanings and forms of being in the world ²⁸.

By defending solidarity, Freire is radically opposed to capitalism, assuming the fight against this

political system whose anti-solidarity nature, sustained by a vicious mercantile logic, causes hunger and misery in the world ^{8,9}. Thus, the author denies the individualism and the exacerbated competitiveness of the capitalist logic; denounces the malaise produced by the market ethic that maintains it and announces solidarity as a strategy to fight; as a result, assumes the historical commitment, along with the oppressed, of fighting to overcome social injustice, promoting, solidifying and establishing the universal ethics of human beings ^{8,9}. To sign this pact with solidarity and ethics, Freire proposes an educational and liberating pedagogical project, aimed at constructing a favorable environment for a democratic and participatory praxis, which has as fundamental assumption the development of the autonomy of students.

The autonomy, in the perspective of Freire, was always considered as a counterpoint to the cultural dependence that all oppresseds are submitted to. Being autonomous, to the author, is to have the historical condition of assuming the dependence of their own finitude, becoming free to overcome the barriers that prevent their authentic existence; so that others are others and not mere models adjusted into the convenience of someone else ³⁴. Therefore, the personal and individual autonomy is directly related to the collective autonomy and linked to solidarity and life in community; which means that, in the same time that each human is co-responsible for the autonomy of the other, *no one is subject of autonomy of anyone* ³⁵. Autonomy, according to PL, is an achievement, the result of a continuous process of consciousness.

Briefly, man is unable to actively participate of life in society, transforming it when it deems necessary, if not helped, if there is not the necessary conditions for comprehending real and making appropriate decisions to meet his needs; continuing his ongoing task of seeking humanity. In this sense, Freire proposes a "problematizing" education ⁹, stimulating the curiosity of the student, and allowing him a critical unveiling of reality, motivating him to actively participate in the construction of knowledge itself. Freire, according to Dussel, found it impossible an education – different than a mere "training" - without the student to be the protagonist, educating himself; leading, in a particular and intransferable manner, its own process of awareness and freedom ³⁶.

In section titled Awareness in Paulo Freire - in his famous work Ethics of liberation: in the age of globalization and exclusion - Dussel discusses on

the theory of the Brazilian pedagogue, affirming that, for Freire, the starting point of the awareness process, capable of leading the students to a critical consciousness, is precisely the overcoming of extreme situations given by the reality in which they find themselves. The perspective is that the student – oppressed - can overcome the naive consciousness in favor of critical awareness; the culture of silence on behalf of the pronunciation of reality and the world; the mystification in favor of demystification. But this is not an easy task. The oppressed does not know freedom and is not immediately prepared to face it, once he has within his consciousness the shadow of values of the oppressor. To expel the darkness of oppression the help of others will be necessary, encouraging the process of awareness and contributing to the search of liberation³⁶.

The fact is that human beings do not fight against incomprehensible forces, of unknown importance, whose concrete forms and historical contours are not realized. The reality will be only modified when the oppressed become aware of the possible changes and the possibilities for an effective participation⁸. Hence the importance, for Freire, of a truly liberating pedagogy, which problematizes reality, which has proposed as praxis that fosters the development of critical consciousness and the suppression of naive consciousness; which allows everyone a critical reading of the world; the consequent denunciation of oppressive or unjust reality and the recognition of the need to fight for its transformation.

It is essential, in Freire, the critical reading of reality as an antidote to what Arendt³⁷ observes in the contemporaneity: a world increasingly taken by violence, where people no longer seek to find consensus, in the collective thinking; where the limit situations are seen as insurmountable barriers and the hope is diluted in the midst of political chaos. For Freire⁸, it is precisely through education that possibility of denunciation of this violent and ugly world is possible and the announcement that it is perfectly possible to collectively build a more beautiful and solidarity world, where all people have the opportunity to be happy. According to him, it is ethical and political responsibility of all humans to strive with radicalism to make less perverse, unjust and exclusionary the societies. To transform reality, adjusting it to the need of all, is a right and a duty that must be taken seriously, individually and collectively.

In other words, since each oppressed is aware of the oppressive reality and understands the possibilities of change, it becomes necessary to join the others, with a commitment to modify the unfavor-

able contexts to the development of their potentialities; *in the words of Freire, there is an ethical responsibility, social, all of us in making our society less bad*³⁸. It is highlighted that, for Freire, a fairer, more caring and humane world should not be understood as a project to be designed for the oppressed and wronged; it becomes necessary that the oppressed themselves think their living conditions and, in this case, any proposal that does not come from them should at least be considered with them. In this perspective, the “condemned of the earth” will never be objects of pity or charity, and should be treated as individuals capable of autonomy; able to rescue and free themselves, the oppressors and the world of any determination that prevent them from being more⁹.

Dialogue between the intervention bioethics and the pedagogy for liberation

The aspect that most approaches IB to PL is that both theories are characterized as ethical-political projects constructed in defense of vulnerable populations, especially those in situations of helplessness either by worsening global inequalities and inequities as at local levels, for the absence of State in sectors that require public performance. In the text Social inclusion in the political context of bioethics³, published in 2005, the IB incorporated into its fundamentals the category “liberation”, decisive in its approach to the ideas of Freire, discussed here. In that text, bioethics is innovatively introduced in Freire’s harvest, starting an approximation for interpretation and search for solutions to the persistent problems that, for centuries, harm life of most vulnerable populations: those excluded by the ethics of the market^{3,6}.

According to the IB, the pursuit of inclusion of Freire’s thought in bioethics can contribute to base the ethical discussions on health, contributing for social inclusion measures and encouraging the construction of more appropriate and accessible health systems. That is, helping to create public environments favorable to achieve more solitary social realities, with better quality of life for the excluded populations³. The IB, therefore, refuses to keep theorizing considering the socioeconomic inequities that so strongly impact the lives of a great amount of people, especially in the developing countries. Concerned, as the PL, with those excluded from the productive system and with those individuals whose survival patterns do not meet the minimum criteria of what is meant by quality of life, the IB puts the reflection into debate, for militancy and for the fight.

The perspective of IB is, in other words, to strengthen ties between citizens, expand the notion of community and belonging to the same society, reiterating the importance of supportive sharing in favor of finding public and collective solutions to problems of common interest³. To IB, especially from the UDHR, bioethics *may fight for empowerment, liberation and the emancipation of the wretched of the earth*³⁹. With these words, from Freire and with him, the IB assumes more explicitly the need for engagement by the recognition of the injustices and concrete achievement of autonomy of men and women in the context of the contemporary world. The IB - as applied ethics and socially committed - reinforces the political territoriality of bioethics, encouraging the traditional bioethics, hitherto exclusively focused on biomedical conflicts, to commit to the reality of the helpless, especially with the reality of the population from the South.

A central point of this discussion is the political character present in both theories, which must be analyzed in its inextricable relation with ethics. Freire, although not dedicating a book specifically to (bio)ethics, brings in his works a strong ethical appeal in favor of life and in the unconditional defense of human dignity. Thus, in one of his early works - certainly the most known - *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire declares his commitment to the *tattered world and those who find themselves in them and thus discovering themselves, suffer with them, but especially with them fighting*⁴⁰. Thus, the author announces that the cause of the excluded is also yours, and should extend as motivation for the fight of all who can be outraged by the injustices and evils of a world driven by the logic of consumption; where 'having' overlaps 'being'; where the high competitiveness ultimately corrupt human nature, diverting it from its historical vocation to "amorousness", generosity and solidarity⁷.

The fact is that the IB has incorporated into its discourse and practice one of the most important aspects of Freire's political proposal: the understanding that men and women are historical subjects, tangible, whose nature is permanently under construction, by making itself⁶, which results in the fact that there are no absolute, stagnant, eternal truths; the knowledge, as a human production, is also historic, surrounded by doubts and uncertainties; to recognize the historical nature of knowledge means to be conscious that it is social production, driven by the dynamism of praxis (action/reflection), of curiosity and creativity resulted from the awareness process that occurs throughout human existence.

Freire's expectation is that, by becoming aware of reality, alienated men and women are able to refuel themselves with hope⁸, and can thus see with their own eyes and develop by themselves, the ability to design their lives in order to effectively meet their interests and needs, individual and collective. In IB, this awareness, followed by an ongoing process of consciousness, seeking to overcome, may result in questioning of ethical models and schemes, before merely copied to be uncritically followed; they may, thereafter, be replaced by proposals or plans connected to diverse contexts of reality in analysis; while decisions start to be based on serious and deep studies of specific problems experienced by various individuals⁵.

More specifically, this critical attitude in the case of IB, leads to the rejection of the uncritical assimilation of the theory of principles⁵, also known as principlism. The IB advocates, as Freire, that there are no ready, premade and determined solutions to problems detected at the expense of the praxis of those who experience them. For the IB, it is essential that the countries of the southern hemisphere begin to look at their problems with their own eyes and not from the perspective of others, as well as it is critical that their delicate contradictions and problems become considered from their own brains⁵.

In this sense, any initiative that disregard the vocation of human beings as conscious corporeal presences in the world, oriented to dialogue, participation and accountability, it is castrating and inauthentic⁴¹. Briefly, by focusing on the critique as an alternative to searching for solutions for the bioethical problems, the IB - as Freire's proposals of PL⁷⁻⁹, sees problems in dealing with issues relating to the lives of people with indifference and lack of commitment, from set formulas imported without a proper "filter" of other realities and latitudes.

The struggle of Freire, with which IB agrees, is for the Southern countries to become aware of their own realities and each human being, in his own way, take to themselves the task of collectively building a different society that, being self-owned, has its citizens as protagonists of their stories; it is a society willing to decolonize itself¹⁷ and cut the chains that hinder its development and making object of foreign interests, not in line with their own lifestyles⁴¹ or, as Fanon⁴² says, a society that could liberate itself from the commitment signed with the oppressor to assimilate their culture and venture within it; pledging to make their thinking as the bourgeois colonizers.

For the southern countries to decolonize, however, it is essential to recognize that knowledge, due

to its changeable character, will always require from those who dominate them, to take ownership of the objects to be known, without ever neglecting the need to assume a critical, ethical, unsettling and creative position. Actually, (...) *if we really want to overcome the imbalances between North and South, between power and fragility, between strong and weak economies, we can not ignore the universal ethics*⁴³ of human being; an ethic based on the fundamental rights of all human beings; one that assumes the joint commitment to fight for the recovery of human dignity and the consequent construction of a more equitable, inclusive and egalitarian world.

For Freire, any action that takes human beings to passivity and mechanization that does not require a minimal elaboration and critical relaboration, will result in a superficial knowledge that will tend to atrophy the human vocation for the debate, for the contradictory, to the praxis⁹. Likewise, by realizing the insufficient character of bioethics principlism and evidence that the needs of the weakest were hitherto disregarded worldwide in bioethical discussions, the IB took upon itself the responsibility to discuss and pluralize this area of knowledge, making it more appropriate to the diversity and complexity of the problems that especially afflict poor populations of the *South part* of the world.

Thus, in line with Freire, the IB incorporates into its speech categories hitherto little known in bioethics, such as awareness, solidarity, commitment, etc., in order to expand and politicize the field of action of such knowledge, distancing himself from the apparently impartial or neutral character, imposed by the so called principlism⁴⁴. It is highlighted the importance of drawing a parallel between IB and Paulo Freire's PL. The humanism proposed by PL, founded in the fight in favor of the socially excluded, meets the precepts that guide IB.

With and from the thinking of Freire, IB manifests itself clearly in favor of its struggle for the liberation of the oppressed; oppressed by injustice, oppressed by poverty, hunger, the "wickedness" of those in power. Furthermore, both for Freire and for IB, the liberation will not be the result of individualistic actions, but of a loving relationship with others, as a consequence of solidarity towards the vulnerable and the commitment to fight for the redemption of their dignity. It is to sympathize with those who are by the margin not only of consumption, but of essential services such as health, education, security, etc., signing an irrevocable commitment to all those who suffer from discrimination and stigmatization, so that, together, there will be a commit-

ment on building a more socially fair world.

But Freire rejects the assistential solidarity practiced by those who, for not believing in the ability of the excluded and for pity, act essentially paternalistic, not contributing to the transformation of the oppressive reality, in where the oppressed is inserted. His ideas are absolutely in line with Selli and Garrafa⁴⁵ who, as noted above, developed the idea of *critical solidarity*, which has as guidance the democratic participation of people in society, without dependent relationships or interests to benefit themselves or others in particular; in contrary, critical solidarity aims to provide to the other concrete tools so he can, by his own efforts, leave the vulnerable situation in which he finds himself.

Therefore, either Freire's PL as the IB believe in building a better world; both perspectives consider possible that the weakest, even pressured by injustice and wickedness of market ethics, strive to build a different society, a society based on solidarity⁴⁶. This solidarity may be built as a part of an educational social project, politically committed to the development of provisions and the continuous exercise of participation, dialogue and democracy that will, necessarily, result in the responsibility and commitment of each individual and in the generosity or loveliness with himself and the others⁴⁷.

Final considerations

The IB has as one of its basic goals the defense of social causes; borrowing the words from Freire, has a clear commitment in the defense of the "wretched of the earth"⁷. It could not be different. The political pedagogy of Freire and IB share the same commitment to freedom, added to the respect for alterity, to the desire of rescuing principles that guarantee human dignity, the indignation against injustice, thus, the need to strive for social justice.

Freire's PL and the BI share the same idea that education is one of the most effective forms of intervention in the world. Both theories, by trusting on education, seem willing to contribute for that men and women, as "conscious bodies", are able to make their own stories and define their own destinies, not letting to be determined by the interests of others. In fact, education, as problematizing and supportive project, has an enormous potential to mobilize once it facilitates awareness and the full development of critical consciousness, in order to pursuit individual and collective commitment, able to effectively lead the oppressed to the conquest of appropriate

conditions to their processes of humanization and liberation.

Thus, as political proposals, the IB and the PL claim all men and women to intervene in reality, assuming the fight for a world guided by the ethics of commitment and solidarity. Specifically, the challenge will be to continue the discussions launched

here. Only an ongoing deepening will indicate the possibilities of joint application of universal ethics advocated by Freire and the principles of IB - especially those present in the UDHR⁴⁸ - as tools and mechanisms in the strive for citizenship and respect to the rights of all persons and groups to build their lives with dignity, autonomy and freedom.

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Pedro Lucas Dulci has worked in the conception, analysis and writing of this article. Carolinne Borges Alves has worked in the conception, analysis and critical revision.

