

Hello, everyone. I will split this brief lecture in three parts. First, I will summarize what Freire understands as autonomy in *Pedagogy of Freedom*. Then, I will talk about Álvaro Vieira Pinto, another Brazilian philosopher, and his comprehension of what going on strike means for working classes. Finally, I will tell you about critical pedagogy experiences we have been developing in IFPE, where I am a graphic design instructor.

What is autonomy for Freire

So, what does *autonomy* mean for Paulo Freire? The first thing I want to point out is that the original title for *Pedagogy of Freedom* actually is *Pedagogia da Autonomia*, which literally translates to *Pedagogy of Autonomy*. So, if *autonomia* was translated as *freedom*, what is the link between freedom and autonomy? We should understand where Freire is coming from because these words might mean a lot of things.

As we have seen in the past few weeks, one key aspect of Freire's thought is that we exist in the world by making history and being made by it. Freire says this attitude is one of "estar com", not simply *being in* the world, but *being with* the world, which necessarily implies that we do not see it as predetermined, finished.

So, when we reflect on our own existence and recognize the openness and indetermination in our *being with* the world, we become conscious of our own unfinishedness and incompleteness. That's why Freire rejects the possibility of being with the world in a "neutral" manner; if we could be "neutral", this would make us simply objects of alien forces. But we should be able to *ser mais*. Instead of being *objects* of history, we become subjects when we realize "it is impossible to humanly exist without assuming the right and the duty (...) to be political".

If the future is not determined and has to be constructed, we must always opt, decide and struggle over what is going to be constructed and assume responsibility for it. This very **process** of making those decisions is *autonomy*. Freire points out that "no one is first autonomous and then makes a decision. Autonomy is the result of a process involving various and innumerable decisions". It is a "process of becoming oneself, a process of maturing, of coming to be".

So now we are able to link *freedom* to *autonomy*. Freedom is what results *through* exercising autonomy, through making choices. However, making decisions and not being responsible for their consequences is what Freire calls a **perversion** of freedom into license. Any decision maker must be held accountable for the consequences of their decisions because "freedom becomes mature in confrontation with other freedoms". That's why autonomy is not an individual attribute; it does not mean detaching oneself from others. Quite the opposite: autonomy can only emerge when we accept our dependence on others and assume the

tension, the contradiction between freedom and authority—that is between the possibility of making decisions and assuming their consequences.

The concept of strike for AVP

Now I'd like to bring about Álvaro Vieira Pinto, another Brazilian philosopher, to aid us in our discussion. In 1962, he published a book called “Por que os ricos não fazem greve?”, which literally translates as *Why don't the rich go on strike?* In this book, Álvaro discusses the concept of *labor*, the division of society between *rich* and *poor* and what this means to a country under the leash of imperialism as Brazil. Vieira Pinto aimed to think philosophically about the strikes happening during the first few years of the 1960s.

For Vieira Pinto, when working classes go on strike, they don't simply *stop working*. Looking from the outside it might seem so. However, what in fact stops is merely one kind of labor: the alienated labor that the rich are able to exploit. He argues that if we understand the underlying essence of going on strike, workers are still working; just not for the rich, but for themselves.

He argues that very time workers engage collectively on strike, they are developing their critical consciousness and perceiving themselves as active subjects in making history. Thus, he sees a very fundamental pedagogic role in that praxis, because each time it happens, workers insert themselves in history and take it in their own hands to make it. That's why he states that “for working classes, a strike *never* fails”. Even if they don't achieve their immediate demands, they are always learning to act together as collective.

So, even though it seems that workers stop working when they go on strike, they are actually **working for themselves**. Labor is employed to develop their own consciousness. The process of coming together and changing their reality cannot be understood as anything other than collective labor to build a new social reality that results in radical solidarity. As Vieira Pinto points out, free men and women “are not solitary, but solidary”. Each worker then recognize that one does not exist as an isolated individual, but is encouraged by their fellows to experience *freedom* by deciding how to employ their labor. Instead of being object of their work, workers become subject of their work. What actually happens when workers go on strike is that they actually start working freely.

préocupe

So, having discussed *autonomy* and *strike* I would like to tell you of my own experience as instructor in the graphic design curriculum at IFPE. Due to our modular curricular structure, founded on principles of problem-

based learning, it is hard for students in each semester to interact with students from other classes. Add limitations regarding physical space to that, and it becomes practically impossible for students from different semesters to engage in extracurricular activities and exchange experiences. This greatly impoverishes the social experience that is characteristic of an undergraduate course.

To address this, together with a colleague, we proposed a set of workshops in which students would tutor each other. We named this event *préocupe* and made an open call for students to propose workshops they would tutor. These 11 workshops took place in December, 2019 after the end of the semester, so my colleague and I were there to give students any support, taking photos and setting up coffee breaks.

While we wandered around classes, it was amazing to see them actually see each other, exchange experiences, especially about their classes and projects. Also, we actually ended up attending some workshops; for example, I became student of my student Carlos on motion design, learning how to use Adobe After Effects for the first time together with students from every other semester, including freshmen. I also took part in an oil painting workshop with Clara. So, we actually switched places!

In closing this iteration, my colleague and I called students to action to hold *préocupe* autonomously: it was to be made by them and for them. And they actually stepped up for it and five people formed an organizing committee to plan and hold the event in February 2020, when classes returned. During the following month, they met again three times to produce the event and design both visual identity and social media campaign. I found that this design process was deeply collaborative: not only they went through the phase of ideation together, but the actual execution of the pieces was also collaborative.

This second *préocupe* had eleven 4-hour workshops plus a roundtable, welcoming students that had begun their studies in the graphic design curriculum a week prior. The whole process was autonomous: no instructor overlooked it and had no access neither to their decision-making of which workshops were tutored nor how tutors organized their time and activities. This time, it happened during regular curricular calendar, so instructors agreed to dispose of their class time for the event to take place. Then, four instructors also took part in the workshops as students.

I interviewed the organizing committee remotely in July, 7, 2020 to gather their own accounts about the event and how they felt. I'll mention a few of their quotes ahead. The fundamental reason for workshops to operate autonomously is to allow them to make their own decisions and emphasize students' abilities to draw from their personal experiences to tutor each other. This proposition sparked curiosity: one of them said "I wanted to know how it felt to be on the other side of instructors' table". And it engaged them in actual

decision-making processes, making them feel that they were there “not only to listen, but there to talk”. They became tutors where they were once students, which completely transformed their relation to the pedagogic space, making them own it a lot more; one of them said that tutoring workshops “gives a sense that this is ours and that by being in it, making use of it, occupying it, we can explore possibilities...”.

So, I believe it is clear how all of this relates to *autonomy*. But I would like to point out that I see *préocupe* as a kind of student strike that appears radically different from typical strikes. If, as Vieira Pinto argues, going on strike actually means stop working for others, this is precisely what happens when students stop and subvert the established hierarchy in pedagogic spaces. Holding workshops based on their experiences and interests, their labor is no longer submitted to attending school system’s criteria of evaluation. Instead, they labor for themselves by creating the consciousness that they are *being with* the world. In this process, they have to make decisions and exercise collective autonomy.

About a month after *préocupe*, Brazil underwent its first lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic on March, 2020. IFPE suspended classes and only returned remotely on September 1. After some resistance about remote activities, we talked and they decided to hold an online iteration of *préocupe* in May, 2021 when the current semester started. Two other people that joined the same team that held the second *préocupe*. We were very suspicious, because the experience of sharing the space was very powerful for all of us. Nevertheless, it also allowed students to get in touch with other people despite of the physical distance and being together in the workshops still thrilled them. This last *préocupe* was named *after do fim do mundo*, which translates as *after the end of the world*. The interview we made after this *préocupe* was recorded and published in our extension program, **desdesign podcast**. If you understand Portuguese, I very strongly suggest you to hear the experience in their own words. Finally, I’d like to thank all of them: Bia, Dany, Isadora, Laura, Rodrigo, Regina and Sabrina.