

Education is Humanization: A Thomistic appreciation of Freirean Pedagogy

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The reevaluation of education has been one of the vital concerns of the previous century, owing to the events therein that defined subsequent history. Various educational systems (e.g., American education in the Philippines) are said to have influenced the prevalence of colonial mindset alongside structures that hinder the autonomy of students vis-à-vis their freedom in learning. It is in this context that Paulo Freire develops his acclaimed pedagogy which promotes a humanizing education that affirms persons as human beings. Over and above the manifold forms of injustice and oppression that threaten personal freedom in reflecting and acting, Freire's pedagogy forwards dialogic education through which students consciously take part in personal and societal transformation. Although Freirean thought is closely associated with Marxism and its influences, the Thomistic tradition nevertheless affirms its core which seeks, above all, "the vocation of becoming more fully human." Jacques Maritain makes it clear that education's primary aim is to "form a man," integrating into a person the cultural, social, and intellectual aspects of human life. Parallel to the Freirean emphasis on the complementarity of reflection and action in dialogic education, too, is the Thomistic valuation for contemplation brought to completion by human action. This paper aims to present the educational philosophies of Paulo Freire and Thomism, through Jacques Maritain, in a harmonious light on two grounds: 1) Genuine education can only take place when the dignity of the human person, intellect and free will, is brought to common consciousness, and; 2) Freedom is the primary locus for dialogue, love, and desire for transformation to hold sway, without which education becomes oppressive.

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