A Book Review Symposium: Henry A. Giroux (2020) *On Critical Pedagogy* [2nd Edition]. Bloomsbury Academic Publishing ISBN 0978-1-3501-4498-9

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Introductory remarks

Henry Giroux is a renowned public intellectual, author, and critical educator. Giroux is recognised as one the architects of modern Critical Pedagogy. He currently holds the Chair for *Scholarship in the Public Interest* and he is the *Paulo Freire Distinguished Scholar* at McMaster University, Canada. In the context of education and resistance, reference to the work of Henry Giroux is *de rigueur*. He has been prolific: over 250 book chapters, 500 articles, numerous international speeches, and 67 books – the latest is the second edition of the

hugely popular and influential *On Critical Pedagogy*, which is the subject of the review here.

Henry Giroux is clearly a distinguished scholar, but for me Henry's contribution is something greater than academic intellectualism alone. Recently over lunch, Henry impressed on me the necessity for educators to make their ideas accessible and available for new audiences – in my view, without engaging a critical mass of people, especially marginalised groups, change is either impossible or short-lived. To prove the point of wide-engagment, after meeting with me, he (with Brad Evans – one of the contributors here) was going to be interviewed by Russell Brand for the podcast *Under the Skin*, which brings serious discussion to his 2.3 million subscribers, most of whom are from a demographic where critical pedagogy will strike a chord but will, most probably, be unheard of. Henry has also been interviewed by Julian Casablancas, the singer from the band *The Strokes*, which was featured in Rolling Stone magazine highlighting critical social justice issues to a wider and largely untapped audience, such as: big banks, the deficit in democracy, and the dangers of corrupt journalism. This kind of organic intellectual work is crucial because he's able to speak directly to those people who can, and need to labour to make *struggle* a centrepiece in their consciousness and actions.

Critical pedagogy has obvious appeal as a practical philosophy against neoliberal capitalism. In this book, Giroux provides an elaborated definition and conceptualisation of critical pedagogy. He does this by stating that critical pedagogy provides the foundations for emancipatory education through addressing:

- the expunging of criticality from the education system
- the rising tide of political authoritarianism
- the moral and political deficit, both, in society and in politics
- common sense assumption about the world and the self

It is clear for Giroux that politics needs to be pedagogical, and pedagogy needs to be political. This diagnosis began in the 1970s, when Giroux was given a copy of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* while a high-school teacher. With Freire, Giroux found himself with the language and theoretical lens to account for the dangerous dismantling of education and society.
Soon after, he began collaborating with Freire, and took Freire's ideas beyond adult literacy education in post-colonial contexts (Gottesman, 2016), as did Peter McLaren, and soon critical pedagogy was gaining wider prominence. Importantly, Giroux recontextualised and nuanced Freire's work for an American audience where the masses, unlike those in developing nations, did not/could not have consciousness of their own position in the stratified social structure:

> The alienation, exploitation, and domination to which Freire refers is certainly an objective fact, but it is far from a subjective perception recognised by most Americans. Not only the content and nature of domination needs to be documented in this case, but the very fact of domination has to be proven to most Americans (Giroux, 1981, p.136)

Giroux's work has unquestionably been a cornerstone to struggle towards remedying this situation, which allows for injustice to prevail. The book ought to appeal widely, and this review symposium brings together an impressively wide range of contributors to cast judgement on Giroux's ideas in this latest book, which is a compilation of essays spanning 30 years of writing. The reviewers are specialists in their field from the USA, England, and Chile; and also, from a range of disciplines, subject areas, and practices. They address the overarching themes of the book that cuts through every essay: democracy, authoritarianism, and hope.

The reviews begin with **Brad Evans**, who brings into focus the way that Giroux presents the violence inherent in the history of capitalism through a sublime aesthetic analogy using Gottfried Helnwein's chilling artwork. The image that Evans uses holds immense provocation, where the observer cannot be relaxed, and this is exactly what Evans sees as the provocation in Giroux's account of the world too. Unlike the other reviews in this symposium, Evans provides us with a glimpse of Henry Giroux - the person – with whom he has a close critical friendship. For Evans, Giroux does nothing less that than inspire – this is a word that **Francisco Duran Del Fierro** also uses in his review. Duran Del Fierro provides a summary account from each part of Giroux's book, culminating with three general observations: i) Giroux's clarion call that education can and ought to promote political critique and radicalism ii) but fomenting agency for transformative action by knowledge alone is fraught iii) the new pedagogy utilising online methods appears to be a progressive and democratic shift, but it is imbued with positivist values that alienates and thus reinforces the dominant hegemony of neoliberalism. **Rob Jackson** provides a forensic reading of the ideas in Giroux's book. Skilfully traversing his expertise of Gramsci, Jackson scrutinises Giroux's utilisation of Gramsci for servicing the argument for promoting critical pedagogy. Jackson applauds Giroux for reclaiming Gramsci from conservative usage, but the deployment of Gramsci would be more productive for Giroux's critical pedagogy if the concept of 'good sense' was more thoroughly appreciated. Jackson values Giroux's treatment of savage capitalism and the neoliberal mentality, but Giroux's claims of fascism may be overstated. The review culminates in calling for an invigorated productive synthesis of a Gramscian inspired critical pedagogy. Henry Giroux as an inspiration and pioneer is also a common thread in **Shelia Macrine's** review. For Macrine, Giroux is more than an intellectual and academic, his work coalesces the personal, public, and cultural for cultivating the necessity of hope and possibility through pedagogy and education. Macrine appreciates Giroux's

description that infers the killing of education's soul. Giroux's book posits a much-needed antidote, at least to the point of promoting a recognition that civil life matters and this can be shaped by agential action. Macrine also highlights Giroux's call for academics to have an active role for educating rather than merely training, thus universities ought to be democracy building institutions. Macrine's review ends by explicating the increasing value of Giroux's work for today's struggles. Similar to Duran Del Fierro and Macrine, **Annette Rimmer** provides an important account of each section of the book. But unlike the others, Rimmer comes at Girouxian critical pedagogy primarily from a practitioner's perspective. This is important because Giroux's mission is to facilitate those like Rimmer who work with marginalised groups, with a pedagogy for social action. Despite giving only passing attention to feminism and gender, Rimmer welcomes Giroux's critical pedagogy noting that humans who have been stripped of their species-being in the slaughter-house of capitalism are unhappy robots suffering dire mental ill-health. Rimmer highlights Giroux's explication of the role and function of critical pedagogy to countenance possibilities of a new nature, and through this comes optimism, which for Rimmer, who is a cultural worker and educator, is the inspiration of Giroux.

References

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Brad Evans, *University of Bath, Bath, UK*

A Critical Friendship: I have a confession of sorts to make when writing this review of Henry A. Giroux's *On Critical Pedagogy*. No living intellectual has had greater impact upon my work and thinking. I have had the distinct privilege of writing a book and a number of projects with Henry, which has given me a wonderful and privileged insight into his generosity of spirit and unrelenting drive in the search for justice. I also consider him one of my closest friends. So, in light of this, I think it's fair to say the review is far from "objective" or "neutral". But how awful would it be if it was written that way?

The cover for Giroux's 2nd edition features another of the brilliant artworks by the Viennese artist Gottfried Helnwein (Aktion Sorgenkind) (above). Featuring a blinded child on a rundown street, her hands are tied by a ribbon that reach beyond the page. This image is perfect for a text that spans nearly half a century of critical effort. This unseeing child is the counterpoint to the blinded Oedipus

who also shaped by the rubble of his times, knew his fate and had it mapped out in advance. The ambiguity to the image is striking. Should we look upon it from the Western gaze, invariably we would scan from left to right, hence witnessing the child present yet puppeteered by a force that is invisible and beyond the pale. All we can detect is the presence of some shadowy and crooked figure, who appears to be controlling her very existence with sinister intent. Should however we adopt the alternative movement, right to left, then we already note the binds that come from the past, while placing the child central to our concerns.

Helnwein's child and Giroux's work perfectly marry together in this aesthetic and critical moment. This is a child who is conscious of being bound by the violence of history. And yet still she strikes a defiant pose. Stood in the street, with her knees already showing bruises and the traces of wounds, still she refuses to give up hope and finds possibility to recover something of her spirit. While her eyes may be covered, we get the sense she truly knows how to see the world. As such she knows that we are the ones so often veiled and unwilling to confront the intolerable.

The child remains truly symbolic for any viable conception of a critical education, which is not simply tasked with learning from the past but has the courage to bring thought to bear on the future. This is precisely what Giroux's book gives to us. Meticulously moving across the landscapes of disposability, it exposes us to the violence of things that often remain hidden in plain sight. Following in the spirit of the late Paolo Freire, what's at stake in this book is not simply about petty disputes over the technical details of good, efficient, or even safe spaced education that has become a fetish for ideological purists. Revealing to us most fully how education is always a form of political intervention, critical

pedagogy, like the critical child, may be beaten down, yet still it refuses to give in and still it continues to have the courage to ask power to account for itself. The monochromatic appearance of the image only adds to the drama, for the untrained eye may look upon it in terms of the neutralisation of colour. There is no neutrality here. Or if there has been an extraction of colour, that is precisely what the dull forces of technocratic reason bring. But in these dark shadows – the dark times that Giroux continues to discursively paint throughout the text, that's where the optimism and hope can be found. Indeed, after reading the book, we might even be forgiven for seeing the young child as the empowered one.

That the cover image was produced back in early 1970s is also perfectly in keeping with the book's contents. Not only is this book a testament to a history of unrelenting and unselfish historical labour. It foregrounds the importance of historical testimony. The book in fact begins with a mediation on "the death of history", forcing us to come face to face once again with the amnesia of certain claims to progress or what Giroux brilliantly terms elsewhere the violence of organised forgetting. There is no viable conception of the political without a considered understanding of the past. And it's in his ability to act as a transgressive witness, where Giroux is at his best.

I do often wonder how Giroux maintains the energy and commitment for the plight of others. What is termed in one of the later chapters in the book "the politics of academic labour", we might recall to also be a true labour of love. This book like Giroux's wider corpus continues to give and yet asks for nothing in return. He continues to produce across the decades, driven by the rather simple premise that no human should be disposable. And it's in this sense we can see that love is a political category. For it gives to others yet demands no material enrichment in return.

I am in no doubt that Helnwein's image is meant to capture both the tragedy and love of existence. And like what the bandages conceal on the young child, these are the issues that course through the veins of this book. Such vitality should not be underestimated. On Critical Pedagogy is vital is so many ways. It is all about the blood we don't see spilling on the streets. It is all about the attempts to blind us from the truth. It is all about the shadows of history. And yet it is also all about defiance in the face of authoritarianism and the forces that continue to annihilate us on a daily basis. It is, in short, all about recovering the critical imagination.

I know in the short space allocated here that it is impossible to do justice to Giroux's tremendous work. This was written out of respect, out of love and out of friendship for a public intellectual truly worthy of that name. But don't take my word for it. Take hold of the book, feel the weight of its historical reckoning in your hands, reflect for a while on the astounding art of Helnwein, then venture into the depths of the human condition and the need for an educated escape. Perhaps then, like myself, you will also find a critical friend in Henry Giroux.

Francisco Duran Del Fierro, *University College London, UK*

The defence of democracy as a form of social and political life involves putting into practice a range of strategies across different sites. Henry Giroux's book offers us one deeply grounded in the classical post-Marxist tradition coupled with a variety of radical theories. In this book, Giroux brings together a myriad of critical approaches in order to propose a pedagogy based on political agency, critical deliberation, and social responsibility. In opposition to "neoliberal pedagogy" and increasing authoritarian threats worldwide, Giroux offers an

extremely novel understanding to rethink the role of pedagogy and expand the notion of critical pedagogy at all levels of education. In this sense, Giroux is troubled by the problem of how pedagogy can become political in a way that schools and universities, teachers and scholars as well as teaching and learning experiences, might reflect the values and practices of democracy, grasped as political life. Thus, Giroux's critical pedagogy is conceived of as "a moral and political practice" (p. 1), "as a way to resist" (p. 1), as a "transformative practice" (p. 186) that takes place not only in schools and universities but also in the wider society. Hence, critical pedagogy entails thinking and acting differently in order to contest "the dismantling of education's critical capacity" (p. 1) and the emergence of a "politics of authoritarianism" (p. 1). But it also reminds us that critique involves imagining new ways of living in society.

Part 1 begins by criticising the degree to which "the culture of positivism" has influenced the practice of pedagogy through "the lens of a focused social and educational problem, the alleged loss of interest in history" (p. 20), particularly in the U.S. The point he is making here, is that the crisis in "historical consciousness" undermines the role of theory and knowledge as a form of liberation from dogma and of politics as a way of reimagining and changing the future. Instead, the positivist approach puts into practice the notion of "objectivity", which represents "the separation of values from knowledge and methodological inquiry" (p. 27). The prevailing of science and objectivism in curriculum development entails the promotion of concepts and practices associated with "reliability, consistency, and quantitative predictions" (p. 36), thus turning knowledge into a measurable and impersonal objects. Therefore, he smoothly asserts that the attempts to ignore the role of history constitute "an assault on thinking itself" (p. 21). This diagnosis leads him to the work of Gramsci to better understand the relationship between ideological hegemony and critical pedagogy. The keystone is to pay attention to "how alternative culture spheres might be transformed into sites of struggle and resistance" (p.

54), within which pedagogical practices play a crucial and significant role. In this regard, Giroux's interpretation of Gramsci's work reminds us that schooling is always part of a broader political and social sphere, but it also remarks that "everyday life and the formation of power" (p. 71) depend on the pedagogical force of culture.

Part 2 links critical pedagogy to the emergence of a fleeting and disposable culture based on the interplay between desire and fear. The emergence of these ideologies erases the values of democracy, social justice and social responsibility. Bluntly put, this situation has led to the priority of the economy over education. The example that Giroux offers is clear enough: whereas the financial sector has been bailed out by the U.S. government, the education sector has been underfunded. Similarly, it gives rise to a new individual subject –the youth– who is now completely transformed into either a mere consumer or a "perpetrator of violence" (p. 111). As a result, this priority brings along a new type of morality whose essence is now associated with "freedom and choice", "punishment and fear" (p. 108) and "corporate time" (p. 231). This entire situation is fairly problematic to Giroux, who tirelessly argues for education as the locus of struggle and resistance, as the sphere of fostering democracy in its various forms. He insists on this role of education because too many youths have now become disposable. At this point, Giroux raises the following question: "What kind of country have we become that we cannot protect our children or offer them even the most basic requirements to survive?" (p. 107). The answer that he offers is thought-provoking: the crisis of youth –who are the embodiment of the future–, reflects the crisis of democracy and as a consequence the demise of the social contract promoted by liberalism.
One way to address this situation, Giroux points out, is promoting a "politics of educated hope" (p. 140) based on the assumption that "a substantive democracy cannot exist without educated citizens" (p. 157). Hope, as Freire puts it, is an

"act of moral imagination that enabled progressive educators and others to think otherwise in order to act otherwise" (p. 186). Having this in mind, Part 3 concentrates on the role of education as a "cultural pedagogical practice that takes place across multiple sites" (p. 162). That is to say, education not only refers to formal institutions but also to new sites of "public pedagogy" and "culture" that operate within a wide variety of formats. Drawing on the work of Cornelius Castoriadis and Raymond Williams, Giroux makes a radical connection between democracy, political agency and pedagogy. Education, in this sense, provides the "capacities, knowledge, skills, and social relations through which individuals recognize themselves as social and political agents" (p. 163) inasmuch as it is a site for democratic struggle. Similarly, Giroux takes up Paulo Freire's approach to complement his analysis of pedagogy as the foundation of political agency and to recognise the connection between knowledge, authority, power and freedom.

Part 4 focuses on how critical pedagogy can be promoted under the rise of new forms of fascism, populism, authoritarianism, and so on, that damage those institutions that make democracy possible. As Giroux posits, "democratic institutions such as the independent media, schools, the legal system, certain financial institutions, and higher education are under siege worldwide" (p. 217). In this context, education runs the risk of becoming a tool to deploy the values and interests of the right-wing. However, Giroux's perspective underlines that now, more than ever before is time to make education central to politics in order to resist the emergence of the movements unleashed by neoliberalism. That is to say, the way to defend democracy from these threats is having more informed and critically engaged citizens, meaning that education –or political pedagogy– both in its symbolic and institutional form, plays a crucial and significant role in promoting civic courage and fostering public values. The last chapter of this book, which is an interview, provides Giroux's theoretical influences and a

view regarding the possibilities and challenges of critical pedagogy in these uncertain times. The point that he conveys here is one of hope for educators worldwide, that is, he underlines that they must keep fighting to connect pedagogy, political agency and democracy in a way that new possible worlds can be envisaged and that an alternative future is possible.

Having highlighted the main issues posited by Giroux, now I would like to raise three considerations. Firstly, Giroux's book reminds us once again of the importance of promoting radical thoughts and practices, particularly in academia. The idea of resistance seems to have been captured by "corporate time" and the culture of "playing the game". His critique on the role of academics and educators in fostering a more radical pedagogy is provoking: "The time has come for cultural studies theorists to distinguish professional caution from political cowardice and recognize that their obligations extend beyond deconstructing texts or promoting a culture of questioning" (p. 170). In this sense, it is important to bear in mind that academic life not only rests upon knowledge production but also is linked to ethics and that both are closely interwoven. Giroux provides a clear and precise understanding of the challenges taking place between knowledge and ethics.

Secondly, it is worth noting that Giroux seems to be aware of the difficulties in relating education and political action in a simple way. It is evident that knowing something does not translate immediately into action, but "it is an essential step towards opening the space of resistance towards authority" (p. 169). In this regard, I would say that political action requires well-educated people in order to participate in democracy and to resist the rise of different forms of fascism, but it is far away from being its point of departure. Political action is also triggered by lived experiences that come from structured inequalities, that are, experiences of pain, suffering, and injustice under a

system of oppression and domination like neoliberalism. These experiences drive the way in which different forms of resistance emerge and how political action can be articulated.

Finally, it is possible to assert that a new form of pedagogy has arrived within and across schools and higher education institutions based seemingly on more democratic and transparent practices of learning: online platforms (the Covid-19 pandemic showed this situation clearly). However, it seems to me that this pedagogy indeed reinforces the culture of positivism posited by Giroux in the sense that it normalises all the aspects of teaching and learning. In addition, this new pedagogy no longer asks about what to teach, which is exclusively political, but about how to teach, which is ultimately technical and apparently neutral. In promoting transparency online learning imposes a sort of schooling that ends up complying with the promise of neoliberalism: individuals completely separated from each other. We must struggle against these forms of teaching and Giroux's book gives us the theoretical tools and inspiration to do so.

Robert Jackson, *Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK*

In these essays, Henry Giroux makes an impassioned call for a critical understanding of education.† Eschewing conceptions of teaching as a "disinterested method" free of politics, he suggests instead that educators and cultural workers, as public intellectuals, should view their practices as entailing the responsibility to nurture an "educated hope" among learners (p.140). This critical pedagogy, which makes both the "political more pedagogical and the pedagogical more political" (p.143), is conceived, after Raymond Williams, as a mode of "permanent education" that extends beyond formal schooling (p.156).

With eloquent outrage, Giroux recounts the injustices of the racialised and gendered forms of oppression and class-based exploitation that underwrite the 'hidden curriculum' in public and higher education. His more recent essays explore, in the North American context, the proliferation of not-so-hidden forms of penal and militarised social control that have arisen in the wake of state policies of deregulation and privatisation.

Giroux describes the unrelenting assault of market forces on the lives of marginalised youth and those groups deemed 'disposable' by the de-humanising calculus of the neoliberal economy in the US. He dissects the logics of punishment and structural racism that have proliferated under the auspices of both Democratic and Republican administrations. Beneath this bleak tableau, Giroux affirms the possibility of resistance to the erosion of democratic public spheres. He identifies education, both in a formal and in a broader sense, as a key site of struggle, where students can imagine transformative new languages to contest these forms of domination, enabling them "to think and act differently" (p.14). Through the development of an "oppositional utopianism" (p.141), Giroux makes the case that educators and cultural workers, in the classroom, the university, and beyond, can empower citizens to construct and sustain participatory and substantive democratic societies.

Well-known concepts of the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci feature prominently among the theoretical resources mobilised by Giroux for this project. Giroux employs a range of keywords drawn from a Gramscian lexicon, including the notions of hegemony, subalternity, common sense, consent, organic intellectuals, and civil society. He makes significant reference to Gramsci's insight that "every relationship of 'hegemony' is necessarily an educational relationship" (p.55; See Gramsci, 1971, p.350). This thought informs Giroux's perspective, which explores "the connection between

democracy, political agency and pedagogy" (p.162), by combining Gramsci's ideas with those of other thinkers, such as Williams, Cornelius Castoriadis, and Zygmunt Bauman.

In chapter two, Giroux takes issue with the appropriation of Gramsci's pedagogical ideas by conservative writers, in particular Harold Entwistle and E.D. Hirsch. Giroux argues that Entwistle and Hirsch take Gramsci's views out of context and distort them for their own purposes, namely to justify a return to forms of rote learning and standardised curricula, thereby reinforcing a deference to authority among students. The origins of this conservative reading lie in Gramsci's polemical response to the 1923 educational reform act in Italy named after neoidealist philosopher and fascist Giovanni Gentile. Gramsci's criticisms of the Gentile reforms in his *Prison Notebooks*, and by extension of their provenance in the ideas of liberal idealist Benedetto Croce, are an attempt to disentangle the reforms' rhetoric, endorsing a superficial notion of 'active education', from their reality, which deprived subaltern and peasant populations of core literacy and communication skills necessary to challenge Mussolini's regime.

Giroux seeks to reclaim Gramsci's legacy from such uses that run contrary to the "critical and emancipatory possibilities" of his wider political project (p.67). Gramsci's reflections on the theme of education certainly highlight the discipline required for intellectuals emerging from subaltern positions to acquire the skills of grammar and logic necessary to develop an effective and autonomous critical thought. However, Giroux reminds us that Gramsci's emphasis on learning as work aims to raise the general cultural level of the population, rather than to entrench a hierarchical social order. In this sense, Gramsci's 'philosophy of praxis', the renewal of Marxism and of philosophy itself with the aim of "renovating and making 'critical' an already existing

activity" (Gramsci, 1971, p.331, p.464), resonates with critical pedagogy's emphasis on the intimate relation between self-change and social transformation, and between "knowledge production" and "self-production" (p.143).

While Giroux is correct to reassert the 'critical' spirit of Gramsci's project against conservative readings, revisiting the complex and variegated meanings that emerge from Gramsci's writings could enrich Giroux's own use of Gramscian concepts. For example, Giroux treats 'common sense' – the taken for granted beliefs and practices of each social stratum that, while continually in flux, both reinforce and are engendered by a particular order – primarily in the pejorative connotation of a struggle against its conformist inertia. Giroux emphasises the project of "unsettling" common sense (p.133), referring less to the immanent role of 'common sense' in the creation of a "new conception of the world" (Gramsci, 1971, p.465). For Gramsci, the 'critical' project to supersede 'common sense' must itself become a more coherent 'common sense', or, in other terms, a critically aware 'good sense' (see Liguori, 2016, Ch.6; Crehan, 2016, Ch.3). While Giroux does not claim to employ concepts in a strictly Gramscian manner, this constructive aspect of 'common sense', arguably dominant in the *Notebooks*, could complement Giroux's use of the term, as it allows Gramsci to contend with the persistently ideological status of alternatives that replace the status quo. Despite Alistair Davidson's argument that the issue of "how good sense is created out of common sense" is under-theorised by Gramsci himself (Davidson, 2008, p.78), the *Prison Notebooks* continue to have much to offer Giroux's productive synthesis of Gramscian concepts with more recent critical theories.

Giroux's foundational contribution to critical pedagogy, understood as consciousness-raising (thinking differently) as a means to foment personal and

social transformation (acting differently), suggests the potential for substantial dialogue with resources that have emerged from the recent season of Gramsci studies (e.g. Liguori, 2015; Cospito, 2016; Meta, 2019). This exchange could present further means to mediate between the agents of emancipatory social change and the circumstances confronting them, and to avoid the 'subjective' aspect of the critical project of overcoming 'common sense' (the 'optimism of the will', if you like) becoming separated from the 'objective' analysis of the relations of forces (the realist 'pessimism of the intellect'). Gramsci's study of the history of intellectuals (organic and traditional) provides a rich account of their mediating role as organisers on the cultural terrain (with enduring significance for educators). Gramsci develops the concrete determinations of this mediation through his creative rereading of Machiavelli's politics and the figure of the 'modern Prince'. As Peter Thomas has shown, this is not simply a code word for an existing political party, but for "the fusion of a new type of political party and oppositional culture that would gather together intellectuals (organisers) and the masses in a new political and intellectual practice" (Thomas, 2009, p.437). Thus, Gramsci situates the emancipatory transformation of 'common sense' in a struggle between competing hegemonies. The constructive aspect of 'common sense' reflects the fact that there is no immediately non-ideological vantage point 'outside' of this terrain of struggles. A key resource for explaining the recalcitrance of our times to Utopian projects, of the type that Giroux proposes, is Gramsci's analytically fertile politico-historical understanding of 'passive revolution'. Recent publications (e.g. Mayo, 2015; Pizzolato and Holst, 2017) have alluded to the potential for critical pedagogy to engage with Gramsci's conception of 'passive revolution'. This concept explains the ongoing capacity of ruling class hegemony, despite recurrent crises, to disaggregate subaltern initiatives and to absorb and deflect subversive energies that challenge the existing social order. Gramsci develops this notion of 'passive revolution' from his account of the *Risorgimento* and of

fascism in Italy. Gramsci's reflections on these ongoing molecular processes that (re-)constitute subaltern groups as passive have great explanatory power for those facing the 'morbid symptoms' of the twenty-first century. I would argue that following the trajectory of this analysis today might help us to discern the most deep-seated obstacles to the reception and effectivity of critical pedagogy's oppositional project.

Gramsci's analysis thus allows us to examine Giroux's assertion, in this new edition of his text, that the United States under Trump is a form of "neoliberal fascism" (p.225). Giroux argues that neoliberalism creates the conditions for a new fascist politics while also being "intrinsically fascist" itself (p.199). While he conceives fascism as characterised by various aspects – as emerging from nihilism and despair, as breeding cynicism, as part of an anti-democratic turn, involving, following Arendt, a 'fear of judging' –, Giroux's characterisation hinges on the concepts of 'illiteracy' and 'ignorance'. On the one hand, ignorance is no longer a simple 'lack of knowledge', it is rather a Lacanian "passion for ignorance" and "refusal to know" (p.94), becoming "the primary organizing principle of American society" (p.200). On the other, illiteracy takes on an active and manufactured form, as a "war" against "language, meaning, thinking, and the capacity for critical thought" (p.200), corresponding to the new forms of right-wing populism and authoritarianism that have proliferated in the digital era.

Giroux provides valuable descriptions of the consequences of the neoliberal politics of the extreme 'centre' (Ali, 2015), which "has produced immense misfortune through its elevation of a savage capitalism to a national ideal that governs not only the market but all of social life" (p.248). However, as Christian Fuchs argues in his review of Giroux's *Terror of the Unforeseen*, "the existence of political leaders with fascist characters, even if they communicate

fascist ideology, does not automatically imply the existence of a fascist society" (Fuchs, 2019). For Fuchs, in order for "a fascist society to come into existence, these leaders need to call forth collective political practices that result in the full institutionalization of authoritarianism" (ibid.). While the sharpening contradictions of the decomposing neoliberal order are a reminder that fascism is not a phenomenon confined to the past, as recent analyses have shown (Palheta, 2018), Giroux oversteps the mark in suggesting that such tendencies within neoliberalism's crisis mark the necessary advent of a fascist society. Nevertheless, his insightful account of the logic of despair animating contemporary US society reveals much of value about the dark consequences of the neoliberal mentality.

Gramsci's reflections on 'passive revolution' and the molecular changes in Italian society that led to the emergence of fascism offer a line of research that can illuminate further these troubling developments in our own times. They link the struggle between hegemonies to an understanding of the integral role played by education in hegemonic relationships. Giroux's early mobilisation of Gramscian concepts in the service of a radical critical pedagogy helped to open a Gramscian pathway in critical education studies. Giroux demonstrates that revisiting Gramsci's thought, in dialogue with more recent critical thinkers, can articulate the coordinates of the 'reciprocal siege' at work in the field of education, between the forms of domination undermining the democratic promise of public and higher education, and the transformative praxis nurtured by critical pedagogy. Deepening this engagement with Gramsci today, by pursuing this interaction between Gramsci studies and pedagogical thought, offers the potential, I would argue, of articulating the catalysing fusion between the "educated hope" (p.140) pioneered by Giroux and the movements among subaltern groups towards a more critically aware 'common sense'.

† I would like to thank Anne Freeland and Marieke Mueller for their comments on a draft of this review.

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This new book is a welcome addition to Henry Giroux's prolific life's work. In the introduction, Giroux writes that early on he recognized that critical pedagogy, as a moral and political practice, does more than emphasize the importance of critical analysis and moral judgments. Rather, it provides tools to unsettle common-sense assumptions, theorize matters of self and social agency, and engage the ever-changing demands and promises of a democratic polity (p.1).

Needless to say, Giroux stands as one of the most influential, living public intellectuals today. His sustained impact can be traced back to a range of theorists extending from Gramsci and the Frankfurt School, to Paulo Freire, Susan Sontag, and Zygmunt Bauman. Recognized as a gifted writer, educator, philosopher, and a cultural critic, he was named as: one of the top *'Public Intellectuals'* in America in 2002, as one of the top *Fifty Modern Thinkers on Education: From Piaget to the Present* as part of Routledge's Key Guides Publication Series, and in 2007 he was named as one of the "*12 Canadians Changing the Way We Think*" by the Toronto Star.

In discussing Giroux's work, Svi Shapiro (2007) writes that Giroux has been one of the more important theorists who addresses how the social spaces for dissent have become smaller, as individuals' lives are turned inwards towards private goals rather than shared concerns. In *On Critical Pedagogy*, Giroux, indeed, takes up this commitment by expanding the breadth of his earlier work. In doing so, he reinforces Shapiro's claim that:

> Giroux's brilliance as a critical theorist is not (never) compromised…his theoretical insights are fully amplified by his explorations of the way daily life, public policy, and political decisions have coalesced to produce an increasingly one-dimensional culture" (2007, p. 1).

In essence, Giroux proves that he is not simply an engaged intellectual, but an intellectual whose work has been dedicated to salvaging the public sphere within, and for an inclusive democracy. While a fierce cultural critic, he constantly reflects and advocates for Critical Pedagogy's ideals of hope and possibility.

Giroux states right up front that all of the chapter essays share a common

belief that:

> Education is fundamental to democracy and that no democratic society can survive without a formative culture shaped by pedagogical practices capable of creating the conditions for producing citizens who are critical, self-reflective, knowledgeable, and willing to make moral judgments and act in a socially responsible way (Giroux, 2020, p.2).

The book consists of an Introduction, and 5 sections comprising 11 chapters which cover over 30 years of his work through present day. Interestingly, the earlier chapters still hold up in their applicability to today's attacks on the nature and condition of public and higher education, today facing the very same criticisms first launched against critical education in the 1970s and 1980s—in the name of 'educational reform'. In his Introduction, he argues that, "Three decades ago, it was precisely the dismantling of education's critical capacity in conjunction with the emergence of a politics of authoritarianism that motivated my involvement in the field of education, and critical pedagogy in particular" (2020, p.3). Giroux adds that the university, and education in general, face a growing number of problems, including diminishing federal and state funding, the incursion of corporate power, a galloping commercialization, privatization, and the growing influence of neoliberalism. While the university, as cultural critic Edward Said (1994) insisted, is the one public space available to real alternative intellectual practices: no other institution like it exists anywhere else in the world today on such a scale (p.541). Yet to many, the encroachment of anti-democratic challenges contributes to what Hannah Arendt (1964) once called 'dark times' — a period in which the public realm has lost the power of illumination. In this new book, Henry Giroux provides one of the most comprehensive accounts of the multifaceted attack on both academic freedom, the autonomy of the

university, and the hollowing-out of schooling.

Giroux begins the five sections with *Pedagogy as Cultural Politics* by building the background to *On Critical Pedagogy* and examining the attacks on education. He also takes up the cultural and radical pedagogy of Gramsci, as well as critical pedagogy's space in the politics of globalization. He is particularly interested in what he calls the war on youth, the corporatization of higher education, the politics of neoliberalism, the assault on civic literacy and the collapse of public memory, public pedagogy, the educative nature of politics, and the rise of various youth movements across the globe. In fact, it is Giroux's assertion that 'public pedagogy' can be used as a powerful resource for engaging people in robust forms of dialogue and activism. He notes that, "a public pedagogy now generally functions to limit the instruments for complex and critical reasoning" (Giroux, 2005, p. xxii). In the second section, *Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Youth,* he analyses the increasingly empirical orientation of teaching, focusing on the culture of positivism and the disposability of youth. He then turns to *Neoliberalism, Public Pedagogy, and the Legacy of Paulo Freire,* where he explicates the threat of neoliberalism and the responsive role of *Public Pedagogy* and the *promise of Critical Pedagogy*. He writes that there are increasing attempts by both the right-wing and liberal interests to reduce schooling to techno-rational training and reducing students to consumers. Here he focuses on the legacy of Paulo Freire, and issues a fundamental challenge to educators, public intellectuals, and others who believe in the promise of radical democracy.

Giroux maintains that the link between schooling and democracy has been lost because the American public has been convinced that education should focus on job training, competitive market advantage, 'patriotic correctness', and the labour needs of the security state. He argues that the resultant decoupling of the

university its obligations to public service and community life is both caused and reinforced by political cynicism and scepticism about education. And that critical thought itself is under attack in the public sphere as right-wing ideological zealots, Trumpsters, and Christian fundamentalists that promote anti-intellectualism. This rigid moralism is fuelled by a deep bias against dissent, appeals to reason, dialogue, and secular humanism. Giroux posits that educators have the difficult task of fostering scholarship that enables students to engage in debate and dialogue about pressing social problems: students must understand not only that civic life matters, but also that they can shape it. Echoing John Dewey's insistence that democracy needs to be reborn in each generation and that education is its midwife, Giroux maintains that academics and others must wage a struggle over the meaning and purpose of the university as a 'public good'—that is, as an institution central to educating students to live in a democracy. Students should be educated rather than merely trained in instrumental skills. This means that educators should foster critical engagement and dialogue while helping students connect knowledge and power, critical arguments, and social and civic responsibility. Academics themselves also need to connect their scholarship to public life, fight to protect their jobs and address the often-exploitative conditions under which graduate students labour, and oppose the creeping privatization of the university.

On Critical Pedagogy is a book that is filled with passion and insight, and should be read by anyone who wants to understand and prepare for the dangers and opportunities of political struggle in the *here and now*, as well as in the future. Revolutionary thinker, Henry Giroux helps us understand why we must refuse to equate capitalism and democracy, or to normalize greed or accept individualism as the highest form of human life. To help us to better understand these threats, Giroux delineates how neoliberalism, for the past 40 years, has been paving a path to neo-fascism, that will have a distinctively contemporary

flavour, yet will be just as destructive as fascisms of the past. With a resurgence of activism in the form of protest and strikes, (e.g.., #MeToo, Black Lives Matter and the recent Teachers' Strikes in Chicago, Arizona, Colorado and Los Angeles-to name a few). Giroux proposes an international social movement that joins together various modes of resistance to illuminate a democratic renewal, and proves himself, once again, as one of the great public intellectuals of our time.

In sum, Giroux calls on all public intellectuals to take action and to develop democratic emancipatory projects that challenge neoliberalism's power, dominance and oppression, and to defend democracy, democratic public life and the public sphere. In response, academics, scholars, and activists are asked to be seen and to see themselves as public intellectuals who provide an indispensable service to the world, and to resist the narrow confines of academic labour by becoming multi-literate in a global democracy in ways that not only allow access to new information and technologies but also enable us to become border-crossers (Giroux, 2004, 2020; Macrine, 2011).

Certainly, among the great thinkers in history, Giroux's hungry mind, insightful analyses, cultural critiques and prodigious scholarship are his defining characteristics. Over the past three decades, Giroux's intelligence, sensibility and dynamic writings have all helped to shape our understandings and beliefs in democracy, culture, the public sphere, education, schooling, teachers, and youth. As evidence in this book, Henry Giroux's influence will continue to be present in many of our existing practices, institutions of higher education, and in the basic assumptions about ourselves and the world we think we know. They say that the truest measure of genius is whether a person's work resonates throughout the ages. It goes without saying that Giroux's legacy will be felt for generations to come. This book, *On Critical Pedagogy,* will introduce new

readers to his genius, and for those of us who are familiar with his work, it will give us a chance to revisit and celebrate his previous writings, as well as his prescient new works in these uncertain times.

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In his introduction, Giroux offers reminders that the fundamental obligations of critical pedagogy are to unsettle common sense assumptions and disrupt the

notion of education as the shameless reproduction of inequalities and, in his words, “cheerful robots” (p.1).

In this second edition, he re-establishes education as a cultural, political and moral practice, duty bound to arouse students and community members into social action. He rethinks radical pedagogy for modernity, for example, Gramsci’s organic intellectuals, or permanent persuaders have new potential for their work outside of academia. For practitioners like me, working with marginal groups, Giroux, Freire, hooks and others have supported us to reframe pedagogy, using non-traditional sites of learning “as part of a broader effort to expand the sources of resistance and the dynamics of democratic struggle” (p.73).

In subsequent chapters, Giroux laments the corporate driven notion of learning where (even in the aftermath of global financial crisis), globalised market forces and their reductive model of education, dominate. Emerging evidence shows that the robots are not so happy; mental ill health, especially among young people, is spiralling.

Having re-set the scene, this new edition moves to consider the resurrection of the discourses of hatred and a new kind of fascism in the post-truth, or as Giroux terms it, the “pre-truth world” (p. 202), where opinions outdo facts. Giroux despairs that we now live in a neo-fascist world where the very constructs underpinning democracy: culture, education, new and traditional media, are in the hands of despots who encourage and thrive on ignorance. His quest is to find a new place for critical thinking in a world where the concept has become dangerous.

Quoting Hedges (2019), Giroux reflects on the history of this neo-fascism in which Trump is seen less as a leader, more as a "grotesque product of failed democracy" (p. 196), whose tyranny was invited in by Clinton and Obama. The book offers an impassioned analysis of Trump as a mouthpiece for extremist groups, reminiscent of past and current dictatorships whose lying has become a "rhetorical gimmick in which all that matters politically is denied." (p. 19) Though Trump is a central figure of toxic politics, Giroux refers also to the global shift to the right, and the brutal regimes of Orbån, Erdogan, Bolsonaro and other "jackals, drunk on greed and power who are willing to kill the planet and any vestige of decency and social justice in order to gorge themselves on wealth" (p.233). He contemplates with horror, the impact of this grotesque mainstreaming of fascist politics on education and he defines education as all encompassing – not limited to the formal domains of schools and universities. It is in this wider cultural realm of *public pedagogy* that Giroux finds optimism – in the argument for expanding critical pedagogical means into the mechanisms that mediate our everyday lives, into new and traditional media, digital screen culture. The discourses of community and the common good, he argues, can be refreshed and resurrected as empowering educational practice. Giroux brings his approach to diverse educational practices in multiple sites in order to challenge the erosion of social justice. Such sites where the "active destruction of particular ways of life, and their transformation into something new" takes place. (Hall, 2019:348) For me, as a radio producer working together with marginalised groups of all ages and intersectionalities, the language of engaging culture in a pedagogy of hope, freedom and transformation (Giroux, 2010; Freire, 1970; hooks, 2003) is inspirational.

As teachers in higher education, we face huge challenges in a world where instrumental, depoliticised learning is prized above critical thinking. Giroux asks how we might imagine an education as central to politics how might we revive a radical imagination and check the nihilism and despair of the current

moment? Giroux's view is that the answers, once again, are to be found in the wider societal realm of collective action against capitalism. Students need to problematise, to reframe private problems as structural, and to be energised to engage in resistance.

He returns to Trump's normalisation of the unspeakable but adds that he has forced us to question capitalism, power, politics and courage. The only hope for change will emerge from a strong counter-capitalism movement and a precursor to this is a revolution in consciousness and values, one that makes education central to politics and "stokes the radical imagination to…shut down the authoritarian machine that has desended upon the globe" (p.237).

The impassioned optimism of this edition lies in his call for a new language of militant possibility or, quoting Leffel (2018) 'imagined futures', even in the midst of market fundamentalism and neo fascism; he asks educators and cultural workers to redefine and transform new media apparatus and *screen culture* into a new social movement, reclaiming the 'promise and possibilities of a democratic public life' (p.96). He underscores Stuart Hall's assertion that all sites of media and culture can be transformed into sites of problematising dialogue and social action. He calls for a belief in the principle of hope and global collective resistance. Education, defined as all forms of cultural work and extending far beyond the classroom, has a central role to play in fighting toxic politics and shutting down authoritarianism.

His final chapter is in the form of a conversation with Brad Evans, in which Giroux reminds us about his own educational background and his discovery of the hidden racism and classism in the formal and informal school curriculum. Asked what he would say to Henry aged fourteen, Giroux repeats the

importance of love, courage, respect, and rejecting the power of fear, to make life "a journey filled with dreams of a more just and equitable world." (p.252) Giroux gives little attention to *feminist pedagogy*, (hooks, 2003) or indeed the gendered nature of education and society; perhaps it is implicit for those of us viewing the world through an intersectional lens. However, I recommend this text, not only for educators, but for learners in all disciplines as it offers a mechanism for self and societal reflection in addition to its clarion call to resistance.

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