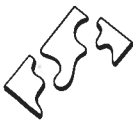

Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition by Henry A. Giroux, South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey, 1983.

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This is an ambitious, even visionary book. In it, U.S. educator Henry Giroux expands his previous critique of educational theory and begins to develop a radical pedagogy that not only illuminates, but also seeks to transform the existing inegalitarian power relations central to society. Giroux's goal is no less than the creation of social and economic democracy, a society that not only eliminates oppressive inequalities of wealth, power, and privilege, but does so as the creation of an "open, self-critical community of inquiring citizens" (p. 190).

How does schooling fit into this? Giroux's concept of radical pedagogy goes beyond a concern with institutional schooling and embraces a broader concept of education as part of an alternative public sphere in which schools feature as a significant site of struggle. Giroux is not utopian in his assessment of schools as instruments of change; he does not propose institutionalized education as a panacea for society's ills. In Giroux's more modest assessment, "the roles that schools and teachers might have in developing radical modes of pedagogy can only be understood within the broader historical, social, and economic conditions that characterize the wider society.... Schools cannot by themselves change society" (p. 234). With that caveat in mind, Giroux examines the significance institutional schooling *does* have and how radical pedagogy can be a liberatory force.

As Giroux explains, schools are more than instructional sites; they are also "cultural sites": "arenas of contestation and struggle among differently empowered cultural and economic groups" (p. 74). Because modern capitalist society is characterized by hegemonic consent as much or even more than by coercion, the ways in which individual and collective consciousness are structured are vitally significant to any theory of radical change. Schools are part of this struggle over consciousness. For Giroux, a central theoretical task of radical pedagogy is to engage in "ideology critique"; indeed, his book can be largely seen as an exercise in ideology critique.

Rescuing ideology from its pejorative usage by both non-Marxist and some Marxist critics, Giroux defines ideology as "a set of representations produced and inscribed in human consciousness and behavior, in discourse, and in lived experiences" (p. 143). Ideology, as the production and critique of meaning, is the (limited) terrain on which people "move and acquire consciousness of their position" (p. 67). For Giroux, as for Antonio Gramsci and Stanley Aronowitz (both of whom have influenced his thinking on this question), ideology, therefore, has both a "negative" and "positive" moment. The negative moment can be understood as the means whereby a dominant class or group establishes its authority and power, its hegemony, by gaining the consent of the oppressed not only at the level of conscious belief, but also by structuring unconscious needs and desires. Giroux does not leave ideology here; he justly criticizes other educational critics for limiting a theory of ideology to a theory of domination, failing to recognize the critical elements of "mediation" (involving interpretation and reconstruction of meaning), critique and contestation that are part of ideology's positive moment of reflexive thought and action.

Ideology critique is the extension of this moment. As a radical educator, Giroux addresses his own profession, examining the assumptions and exposing the limitations of existing theories of pedagogy. While Giroux is eloquent about the shortcomings of "traditional" and "liberal" educational theory, he focuses most intently on the limitations of radical analyses. Giroux's sincerity and strength as a critic is revealed in this project; as the gesture of a comrade, such criticism is meant as a contribution to the larger liberatory goal of creating a just and democratic society. Critical theory, such as he advances, must be capable of self-criticism, the ability to question its own normative structure (p. 15).

This is not new ground for Giroux. He has surveyed the work of Bowles and Gintis, Bourdieu and Bernstein, Willis, MacRobbie, and Apple before. But *Theory and Resistance in Education* shows the maturation of Giroux's thought. While he examines the "problematic," the set of questions *and* structured silences of each theoretical approach, as he has done elsewhere, he goes beyond such reflexive but ultimately limited evaluation of the "rationalities" that govern radical, as well as traditional and liberal, educational theory. By analyzing how Marxist structuralist and culturalist accounts fail either to adequately consider the limits defined by social structure or the emancipatory potential inherent in human agency, Giroux takes the first steps toward developing a truly transformative pedagogy that avoids such dualism. His theoretical reconsiderations of the structure of subjectivity, of ideology, and ideology critique are central to his understanding of a radical pedagogy that allows for emancipatory hope and strategy, while mindful of the constraints

and limitations which radical teachers and others face. Taking his cue from the Frankfurt School, Giroux selects elements from the Critical Theory of Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse that help him to construct a pedagogy that avoids the deep pessimism and functionalism, the narrow glorification of individual expression, or the facile celebration of cultural resistance of previous radical educational theories. Such a pedagogy not only redefines rationality by linking critical thought with social and political liberation, and individual freedom with social freedom (pp. 21-22), it is also sensitive to the positive and negative moments within the cultures of oppressed groups, providing room for both rejection and affirmation, self-understanding and critical reconstruction. Giroux rejects a theory of subjectivity and hegemony that restricts the locus of ideology to either the conscious (in the form of "false consciousness") or the unconscious (in a manner that robs the subject of the power to act, transform, transcend).

According to Giroux, a radical pedagogy must address not only the cognitive aspects of learning and awareness, but needs and desires as well since oppression is rooted not only in socio-economic structures but also in "the sedimented history or structures of needs that constitute each person's disposition and personality" (p. 147). He therefore situates the terrain of ideology in three "locations" or "operational fields." In addition to the unconscious, Giroux adopts Gramsci's concept of "common sense" as a conscious and *contradictory* field in which meaning is reproduced and produced. Common sense is the (conscious) "realm of ideas and behavior in which elements of accommodation and resistance exist in an unsteady state of tension" (p. 151). Here ideology is expressed not only through discourse but also in practical activity, embodied in lived experiences that contain the inheritance of past history, past consciousness. Lack of critical interrogation of these elements are its singular characteristic, but while marked by naive unreflectivity, common sense embodies contradictions and tensions that are "pregnant" with possibilities for social change (p. 152). Finally, Giroux elaborates upon the positive moment of ideology at the level of "critical consciousness," which challenges all aspects of everyday life and explodes the reification of thought itself. Critical consciousness and the ability to think dialectically is a radical form of appropriation of unintentional truths hidden within any cultural artifact or social relation and leads to demystification, reconstruction, and action for social change.

Ideology critique, therefore, becomes a central task of radical pedagogy. Such a critique investigates not only the way in which texts, behavior, and classroom practices legitimize and reproduce the dominant social order; it also looks at how meaning is produced and mediated by human subjects who interpret such texts, behavior, and

practices through their "historical, positional, family and class background." A radical pedagogy which embraces the critical positive moment of ideology, encourages the formation of critical consciousness, engages in "reconstruction"—"critical appropriation and transformation" (p. 160). Such a critical pedagogy aims at "providing students with the knowledge, skills, and critical sensibility they need to be able to think dialectically," to be able to interrogate their own histories, penetrate the categories of common sense, and move beyond their confines (p. 161).

Giroux therefore provides key elements for a radical pedagogy at the level of the creation and critique of meaning and of the structuring of needs and desires as well as belief. However, he cautions that any radical theory of education must be as aware of the institutional components, the "material determinants and principles through which antagonistic classes and groups construct their daily experiences" (p. 162) as it is of the more limited terrain of meaning that ideology represents. Radical pedagogy must contain a critique of the "cultural field," that arena of institutions and social practices in which social groups and formations struggle for power as well as establish agreement, that defines both the logic and limits of domination as well as the boundaries of and possibilities for political and cultural transformation. Critical thought and action, according to Giroux, must be grounded "in the dialectical relations between consciousness and unconsciousness, experience and objective reality" (p. 150).

As a feminist educator, I find Giroux's rescue and rehabilitation of the concept of ideology, within a broader theory of cultural politics, a valuable contribution to radical pedagogy. Feminist revision of psychoanalytic theory has attempted, for example, to connect structural domination to patterns of child-rearing that shape the deep structures of male and female personality. And at least part of the feminist educational project, as embodied in consciousness-raising (C-R), is the critical examination of traditional needs and desires, and the recognition, creation, and validation of new, "radical" needs and desires. By acknowledging culture as a central terrain of struggle, Giroux includes arenas other than the workplace, and relations other than the means of production, as significant determinants and mediators of consciousness as well as forms of domination other than class domination. For example, he concurs with feminist critics who claim that studies of cultural resistance of oppressed groups have failed to adequately include a "notion of patriarchy as a mode of domination that cuts across various social sites . . . that mediates between men and women within and between different social-class formations" (pp. 104-105). However, class does remain the main structuring category in *Theory and Resistance in Education*, and Giroux's frustrations with the limitations of Marx-

ist discourse are not fully developed even as he prepares the ground for a critical theory that, while informed by the historical legacy of Marxism, breaks with it in significant ways that are more inclusive of the explanatory claims of gender and race. A fuller, theoretically sharper statement of the limitations of even the revisionist Marxism that informs the discourse of *Theory and Resistance* can, however, be found in Giroux's most recent article, "Marxism and Schooling: The Limits of Radical Discourse," (forthcoming) which attests to his ongoing ability to develop and grow as a critical theorist.

Giroux's emphasis on the materiality of culture also reflects his concern that theory, while important and valid work that has its own integrity, must not be severed from the tasks of political organization. The final chapters of his book exemplify this connection. Here he applies ideology critique to the concepts of citizenship and literacy education and calls for a broader concept of education as part of an oppositional public sphere.

Giroux's chapters on citizenship and literacy education are set pieces which stand by themselves but nevertheless emerge from the concerns expressed in the rest of the book. Criticizing the dominant rationalities informing current educational theories, Giroux examines how each reduces citizenship education or literacy practices to either a matter of technique and skill, or the hierarchical transmission and consumption of knowledge, or the intersubjective negotiation of meaning abstracted from political and cultural context and significance. Giroux focuses here on the weaknesses of traditional and liberal theory: for example, his critique of the hegemonic "American Ideology" dominating citizenship education. However, he does not exempt radical theory from criticism, which, as in the case of the theorists of cultural reproduction, succumbs to a pessimistic appraisal of power as only an instance of domination (pp. 77, 225). Literacy education, in this view, serves as yet another means by which the knowledge, values, taste, and language of the dominant class or group are confirmed or privileged, while the cultural identities of subordinate groups are devalued and invalidated, helping to "reproduce" the inequalities of society at large. While not discounting the force of this insight, Giroux criticizes theories of reproduction for failing to adequately account for resistance to such disconfirmation or allow for the production of counter-ideologies by members of subordinate groups drawing upon their "cultural capital." A dialectical notion of power, of human beings as agents as well as objects of power, is missing from these "radical" accounts according to Giroux.

But aside from the acuity of his critique, the power in Giroux's argument lies in his discussion of how citizenship education, how literacy education, *can* become tools for social and political transformation,

affirming the voices of the oppressed, providing the "excluded majorities" of women, minorities, working-class, and alienated middle-class students with the means to reclaim and critically examine their lives and histories. Such an emancipatory re-vision of education extends beyond the classroom. In his advocacy of concepts like "civic courage," the willingness to act *as if* we lived in a democratic society, an extended understanding of "sociability" that does not make the stranger "other," and conceptual and political literacy that promotes sustained understanding and encourages social action, Giroux indicates that an engaged educator must not only relentlessly critique that which is, but must also "dream, imagine, think" that which can be, and act in concert with others to bring this about.

Such action beckons the radical educator out of the classroom, into what Giroux calls the "public sphere." Not unlike Gramsci's "civil society," the public sphere mediates between the state and bourgeois society as the realm in which the ideological battle for the appropriation and transformation of the state, the means of production, and the institutions and social relations of everyday life can take place. Such a public sphere suggests an aware and active citizenry. The ways in which modern capitalist society militates against the development of a democratic public sphere and impoverishes the rational and imaginative life of its members points to the gap between promise and reality.

In order to help close that gap, according to Giroux, radical educators must engage in struggles in alliance with others around institutional education, around the policy decisions and distribution of resources that affect the control and content of public schooling. However, Giroux is canny about how limited a terrain of struggle schools are, and he calls for participation in a broader concept of education: education outside the established institutions, education which directly addresses the need for social and economic democracy. Such education would involve work with adults around issues that directly affect their lives, providing the knowledge and social relations that enable critically informed struggle around those issues. Radical education of this kind would demystify intellectuals and clarify the relation between theory and practice. Theorizing about the nature of social reality would be recognized as something we all engage in and would be claimed as communal work; the truth claims of various theories would be analyzed and evaluated through dialogue by participants in such alternative public spheres (p. 240).

Such an expanded and inclusive concept of education links radical pedagogy actively to organization for social change and invites self-examination on the part of the left. I agree with Giroux that we need to know our history, need to know where alternative public spheres lie, and how oppositional cultures and communities have been cre-

ated and have nurtured the elements for a democratic and radical pedagogy. I would point, for example, to such tantalizing if problematic fragments as the children's "Sunday Schools" organized by the women of the old Socialist Party, as well as the workers' education established by the nationality federations, and the cultural activities sponsored by union halls and workingmen's clubs at the turn of the century. More recently, elements of alternative public spheres have been created by groups and in arenas that have seriously challenged the traditional left's hegemonic aspirations: the emergence of the civil rights movement out of the Black Church and Black student culture, the feminist movement which, in its early years, built on a network of such small "consciousness-raising" groups, and today's peace movement which gathers people in a variety of settings, including both the Catholic Church and feminist alternative communities. These are developments which we, as radical educators, need to understand and be a part of.

Further, we need to know where radical incursions into institutional schooling have been successful and why. For example, the proliferation of women's studies programs at the level of higher education is a phenomenon directly tied to the emergence of feminism as a political force; knowledge of how feminism has fared within the confines of institutional education would be useful for radical educators wishing to keep open spaces for the examination of oppressive ideologies and the creation of emancipatory ones.

Theory and Resistance in Education is not without flaws. It is, for example, somewhat repetitious and could be better organized so as to draw the reader's attention more quickly to its new contributions to a radical theory of education: for example, the focus on ideology and ideology critique as arenas of struggle and the discussion of how radical pedagogy must address needs and desires as well as knowledge and belief. This weakness emerges from Giroux's desire to cover most major debates in pedagogical theory as well as lay the theoretical groundwork for his contribution, thereby situating his criticisms and new conclusions. But while such careful review of the literature is helpful to readers unacquainted with the material, it also obscures the original elements of the book. While the language of *Theory and Resistance in Education* is complex and often specialized, it can be read by readers not especially familiar with educational or Marxist theory since Giroux neither assumes acquaintance with technical terms nor patronizes his audience. Giroux is creative in his consideration and clarification of previous theoretical efforts and development of new tasks. I recommend *Theory and Resistance in Education* as the work of an engaged, risk-taking educator.

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