

## RATIONALIST HOPES AND UTOPIAN VISIONS

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Education is buffeted by countervailing winds. Advocates of progressive reform and radical renewal vie for the high ground against conservative retrenchment, all seeking the allegiance of parents, educators and policy makers. Each group offers diverging analyses of the current malaise, principled arguments in support of their goals, and characteristic programs of educational change. Each offers empirical evidence and theoretical support. And each reflects perennial currents in the ongoing dialogue.

In the following I will contrast four apparently incompatible theoretic proposals for educational reform. Each of these rests on foundational theories, and each recommends characteristic programs for educational practice. Most important, each reflects core intuitions that have profound implications for the epistemology that underlies the debate on the nature of rationality and knowledge prompted by recent discussions of postmodernism and multiculturalism.

The authors who will serve as the focus for our discussion are Harvey Siegel, whose recent works include arguments in support of an anti-relativist, yet fallibilist and pluralist foundationalism,<sup>1</sup> Henry Giroux, who has argued for an anti-foundationalist version of pluralism,<sup>2</sup> John McPeck, who places the disciplines at the center of education,<sup>3</sup> and Richard Paul, who sees educational grounded in natural language as an available frame for rational critique.<sup>4</sup> Looking at all four will serve to point to a direction in which an epistemology adequate to ground educational practice is to be found. Space permits only the most sparse indications of their positions, and little more than a bare indication of the possibility of synthesis.

John McPeck's theory of rationality grows out of his seminal criticism of the critical thinking movement. The core is the following argument:

It is a matter of conceptual truth that thinking is always about X, and the X can never be "everything in general" but must always be something in particular. Thus, the claim "I teach my students to think" is at worst false and at best misleading.<sup>5</sup>

Taking critical thinking to be "reflective scepticism" — the disposition and skill to suspend or temporarily reject "available evidence from a field" as "sufficient to establish the truth or viability" of a proposition or action<sup>6</sup> — he sees the concept of good reasons as central to the account, and "a minimal condition for understanding a good reason in any field is that one understands the full meaning of the specialized and often technical language in which such reasons are expressed."<sup>7</sup> Fields are reflected in school subjects and academic disciplines, which he places at the center of education.<sup>8</sup> Striving to develop rational and autonomous students,<sup>9</sup> he privileges the disciplines which contain "basic ingredient of rationality itself."<sup>10</sup> They provide a "powerful set of analytic lenses through which students can come to understand problems, and to grapple with them in rational ways."<sup>11</sup> They include "key concepts and ideas," the "building blocks for intelligently talking about and exploring experience."<sup>12</sup>

McPeck sees the disciplines as "more or less structured embodiments of the simple "forms of life" which gave rise to them." And so, "much of what we regard as "common knowledge" and "everyday problems" are included within the disciplines." The disciplines attempt to "provide progressively

more sophisticated insights” into the everyday concerns that constitute their genesis.<sup>13</sup> The power and relevance of the disciplines explains why: “Traditionally, the public schools have been engaged in the business of trying to provide students with the knowledge and understanding contained in these disciplinary networks, concepts, and procedures.”<sup>14</sup>

McPeck epitomizes his position by making two claims. “First, the disciplines, over the millennia, provided many important answers to important problems which used to perplex mankind.... Second, through the use of their general concepts, and rich language, the disciplines provide a very powerful set of analytic lenses through which students can come to understand problems, and to grapple with them in rational ways.”<sup>15</sup> The disciplines provide both information and criteria for relevance. “In short, when the disciplines are effectively taught, they provide the most fundamental (and inescapable) cognitive requirements for being rational.”<sup>16</sup> It is not that everyday problems are uniquely situated in particular disciplines, but rather, “each kind (or kinds) of knowledge plays its particular role in solving particular problems.”<sup>17</sup> McPeck offers the analogy of the marine crab which is “composed of several different kinds of limbs, each designed to do a specific kind of job.”<sup>18</sup>

Richard Paul, to the contrary, claims that education limited to the academic disciplines is insufficient, if our goal is thoughtful students. This is for two reasons. First, the disciplines are too narrow. “Academic disciplines with their compartmentalization of thought fail to provide a plausible approach to everyday uncritical thought.”<sup>19</sup> This is because “we live as inferential beings enveloped in unformulated systems.... The world of our self-constituted experience is heavily synthesized, but unconsciously, egocentrically and sociocentrically so.”<sup>20</sup> He sees knowledge and thinking within disciplines as “monological” and “technical.”<sup>21</sup> Monological and technical thinking, he maintains, is inadequate to the task of understanding and confronting the complex multilogical issues which characterize the concerns of everyday life. “Many of the most important questions we face are multi-disciplinary or inter-disciplinary by nature.”<sup>22</sup> These require “multilogical reasoning in natural languages rather than scientific methods in technical languages.”<sup>23</sup> “Technical knowledge is typically developed by restriction to one frame of reference, one standpoint.”<sup>24</sup> But what is required, both for everyday problems, and for the critical examination of questions within disciplines, is dialectical thinking, thinking that is constituted “by general cannons [sic] of argument, by objection (from one point of view) and reply (from another), by case and counter-case, by debate not only about the answer to the question, but also about the question itself.”<sup>25</sup>

The disciplines are, themselves, grounded in ordinary (natural) language in a fashion that requires the disciplines to be transcended, if understanding and intelligent application are to result. The function of natural language is both broad and deep, encompassing the special disciplines and more besides. Paul maintains that “in the background of all thinking are foundational concepts, assumptions, values, purposes, experiences, implications, and consequences — all embedded in lines of thought radiating outward in all directions.”<sup>26</sup> To enable the background to emerge, Paul recommends dialogical and dialectical thinking.<sup>27</sup> The relationship between dialogue, dialectic, and the various sorts of bias that are at the center of Paul’s concern, is articulated in his account of “background logic,” and what he calls “irrational language games.”<sup>28</sup> Background logics are the various elements that surround “any line of thought,” “a large substructure of *background thought*, *logical connections* not lying on the surface of reasoning, but prior to it, underlying it, or implied by it.”<sup>29</sup>

These determine the “dimensions of background logic”: the domains of pre-thinking, substructure, implications, and intellectual conflict.<sup>30</sup> They reflect, respectively, how we “frame a goal or formulate an issue or problem” about which we reason; “the concepts and assumptions presupposed in the reasoning”; “implications and consequences” of the line of reasoning; and what is revealed when we set the line of reasoning “into conflict with competing lines of thought.”<sup>31</sup> All of these dimensions of background logic support “irrational language games,”<sup>32</sup> since “we absorb these structures uncritically through socialization. We are not encouraged to explicate them or assess

them.”<sup>33</sup> Paul sees these structures as often “misused or confused,” resulting in “category mistakes in which people radically mis-describe their experience.”<sup>34</sup> But, the inferential structures are not all of a kind. Paul sees three important categories of background logic: “the natural language we speak,” “the technical languages we study in school,” and “the sociocentric logic of our peer group or culture.”<sup>35</sup> These are related to each other in various ways and permeate the four dimensions of background logic. What is most crucial to Paul’s analysis of critical thinking is the special role of the logic of natural languages, which permits “rational” language games to be played.<sup>36</sup>

Dialogical and dialectical thinking in natural language utilize “a resource for virtually unlimited conceptual possibilities.”<sup>37</sup> Technical language is “one-dimensional (monological), specified in fine detail, narrowly defined and procedurally developed.”<sup>38</sup> Natural languages are “much more flexible than technical languages. They are more neutral than the belief systems of cultural groups” and are required, since the language of social behavior “often incorporates ordinary language in distorting ways.”<sup>39</sup>

Problems of bias, ethnocentrism and sociocentrism are at the heart of Paul’s position, structuring his most widely known contribution: “strong sense” critical thinking. And so Paul places deep intellectual attitudes at the center of his concern. Paul sees pervasive bias as requiring the countervailing force of the intellectual virtues.<sup>40</sup> The intellectual virtues reflect what Paul calls primary and secondary natures, primary and secondary responses to the need for reasoning. “Our primary nature is spontaneous, egocentric, and strongly prone to irrational belief formation.” Secondary nature, people’s capacity to be truly rational, “to recognize their tendencies to form irrational beliefs,” requires “extensive and systematic practice.”<sup>41</sup> The virtues are seen as needed, in light of our primary nature, to support the development of our secondary nature. The intellectual virtues address the thinker. Thought itself is by addressed through the perfections (imperfections) of thought: “general canons for thought; they represent legitimate concerns irrespective of the discipline or domain of thought.”<sup>42</sup>

What are we to make of these recommendations? Using the broadest strokes, McPeck can be seen as heir to the Platonic vision, conservatism reflecting English upper-class education — Oakshott, to Leo Strauss, to Allan Bloom, to William Bennet. Paul’s emphasis on natural reason reflects the optimistic liberalism of progressive education — the belief in a unitary political and social discourse, without which democracy loses its rational core. But both views are problematic.

What McPeck says is true in at least one fairly obvious sense. The disciplines are extraordinarily useful repositories of the accumulated wisdom of disciplined inquiry. The utility of given disciplinary lens for education is quite another issue entirely. McPeck never elaborates his view of the disciplines and there are obvious problems with the approach. The disciplines, in contrast to social constructed academic subject areas, are far from uniform within, and share many features across disciplines. So it is difficult to identify an educationally relevant disciplinary core. Moreover, as McPeck seems to admit, problems of many sorts are difficult to situate within particular disciplines. There are overlaps in method, cross-disciplinary inclusions and deep disparities. This is hard to reconcile with the received theory of the disciplines, and accounts for the lack of progress of projects such as Paul Hirst’s forms of knowledge or Philip Phenix’s realms of meaning.

Recent literary theory, philosophy of science and cognitive psychology shed light on the issue as well. The fragmentation of attempts to understand texts applies to our understanding of disciplines. The practice of chemistry is one thing; interpretations of that practice relevant to education another. The value of the former is no indicator of the value of the latter. Disciplinary practice underdetermines the content and methods of instruction. It informs but does not construct our textbooks; it limits but does not compel pedagogy. Without a theory of the disciplines and a theory of how disciplinary learning occurs, discipline-based education is no more than a promise and a hope. But both the theory of the disciplines and our understanding of disciplinary learning are in flux.

Attempts at uniform characterizations of method in the philosophy of science have given way to particularist studies focusing on crucial historical junctures, sub-disciplines, and individual problems, many of them cross-disciplinary. The logical structures that supported our previous understanding, reinforcing the positivist image of clear and available underlying methodologies, are not helpful for understanding scientific practice, nor are they necessarily helpful for teaching such rational practices. The logic-based image of the organization of rational knowledge was reflected in a logic-driven model of cognitive functioning as well. This classic model, beginning in Aristotle, refined in Kant and scientized by Piaget, has proved less and less useful, as decades of work in cognitive psychology based on normatively driven accounts of deductive and inductive competence are replaced by information processing approaches and schema theory. The pedagogical consequences of all this remain to be seen. But they clearly point away from educational business as usual.

There is a parallel issue for natural language seen as the foundation of an underlying rational competency, as in Paul's view. Clearly, evidence within linguistics points to a unitary linguistic capacity. And despite foundational misgivings, and granted hermeneutical limits, translation from one natural language to another points to a unity of underlying structure that supports the possibility of linguistic enrichment and growth. Natural languages, indeed, form a frame around our linguistic practices. But seeing natural language on the model of "universal grammar" belies the enormous differences among the languages in use within the lifeworld. For there is no unitary lifeworld shared by all, even within a society, and hence no unitary mode of expression that expresses the lived experience in general. The point is worth making. If our languages reflect our lives and our understanding, they differ in so far as our lives and understandings differ. Among these differences, are differences in discursive practices and in the norms that govern them. On this model, the criteria Paul presents are no less disparate in their application to speech within social discourse communities, than they are to speech within academic disciplines. But then, how are we to negotiate among them?

Paul's solution is dialogue, and so fairmindedness and openness to the perspective of others — intellectual humility — is the hallmark of the critical thinker. Much needs to be said in support of this position if diversity of criteria and standards is seen as characteristic of the intellectual virtues, for such diversity needs to be addressed within a meta-frame in which all dialogical positions are of *prima facie* equal worth. This is the social core of Habermas' ideal speech situation: equitable access to the dialogue, and equality within it.<sup>43</sup> But, such an ideal is rarely, if ever, satisfied in actual societies where those with access to the means of communication — education, power, and prestige — have a disproportionate ability to make their case. This is never true in the hierarchical contexts within which education takes place.

Tying the foundation of educational practice to the disciplines or to some vision of natural language invites radical critique. As already mentioned, feminists and postmodernists have all challenged the privileged epistemological, cultural and educational positions of such foundationalist heirs to the Enlightenment. But there is strength to McPeck's and Paul's positions, for each affords a basis for rational practice, and it may be provable that some such basis is required. Harvey Siegel attempts such a proof.

Siegel is motivated by the fundamental question implicit in postmodern and multicultural critiques of enlightenment universalism: "Is knowledge (and/or truth) relative — to time, to place, to society, to culture, to historical epoch, to conceptual framework, to personal training or conviction — so that what counts as knowledge, or as truth, depends upon the value of one of more of these variables? Or is knowledge 'absolute,' or universal, in the sense that they are such independently of these qualifying considerations?"<sup>44</sup> He responds to the first question by denying the relativism that it indicates, and answers the second question in the affirmative, offering a version of absolutism, which he distinguishes from traditional, "vulgar" absolutism with its commitment to infallibility.<sup>45</sup>

The heart of Siegel's attack on relativism is the argument that he constructs based on Socrates' response to Protagoras' claim that "man is the measure of all things," as reported in Plato's *Theatetus*. Siegel epitomizes Socrates' argument by quoting the following passage: "[Moreover] Protagoras, for his part, admitting as he does that everybody's opinion is true, must acknowledge the truth of his opponent's belief about his own belief, where they think he is wrong." He continues: "[Protagoras would be forced to] acknowledge his own belief to be false, if he admits that the belief of those who think him wrong is true...[for he] admits that this opinion is as true as any other."<sup>46</sup> Although relying heavily on Plato's offering, Siegel reconstructs the argument as containing two distinguishable claims:

1. Relativism can be shown to be incoherent in that it "undermines the very notion of rightness...in which case relativism cannot be right," and
2. "because [relativism] holds that all beliefs and opinions are true, yet, given conflicting beliefs, some beliefs must necessarily be false — in which case relativism cannot be true."<sup>47</sup>

The argument indicated above is employed against many variations of relativism.<sup>48</sup> Despite the apparent diversity of the positions he attacks, Siegel sees them as having a common core, which he characterizes as "epistemological relativism (ER)."

His central claim is that ER yields paradoxical results, since "if ER is true...ER is itself relative to alternative, and equally legitimate, sets of background principles and standards of evaluation. Since these alternative sets will suggest differing evaluations of ER, and since there is no way neutrally to pick one evaluation over and against any others, it follows that, if ER is true, then ER's truth will vary according to the principles and criteria by which ER is evaluated. In particular, it follows that, if according to set of standards  $s_1...s_n$  ER is to be judged false, then, if ER is true (at least according to  $s_1...s_n$ ) ER is false."<sup>49</sup>

Siegel's argument gives us little more than the most abstract framework for objective rationality, yet it furnishes a limit beyond which critique cannot go. It requires a strong distinction between justification and truth, truth necessarily independent of, for example, confirmation or belief, so as to enable it to stand as a criterion of judgment. It argues for the necessity of some fallible, yet objective, non-question-begging standpoint from which evaluation is to take place. Such a minimalist, yet substantive framework raises the essential question: Can such an absolutistic, yet fallibilistic limit to critique accommodate postmodern intuitions?

Henry Giroux and Stanley Aronowitz present an image of the sort of critique common in educationally relevant postmodernist themes. What is most essential for our discussion is their attempt to reconcile "the modernist emphasis on the capacity of individuals to use critical reason in addressing public life with a critical postmodernist concern with how we experience agency in a world constituted in differences unsupported by transcendental phenomena or metaphysical guarantees."<sup>50</sup> Reconciliation is required, for the authors cannot rest easy with postmodernist ambiguities, for they, along with modernist reformers, see the need for "constructing a critical discourse to both constitute and reorder the ideological and institutional conditions for a radical democracy."<sup>51</sup> They agree with Ernesto Laclau, who in "Politics and the Limits of Modernity," maintains that "the postmodern challenge to modernity does not represent the abandonment of its emancipatory values so much as it opens them up to a plurality of contexts and an indeterminacy."<sup>52</sup> This creates a dilemma for those who both embrace postmodernism and advocate an emancipatory program of educational reform. Failing the "master narrative" that constituted the core of Enlightenment foundationalism, the possibility of a rational political life is brought into serious question, and with it the hope of supporting progressive educational change in a non-arbitrary manner.

The construction of political life through rational procedures that reflected the assumption of human rationality and the possibility of objective knowledge has been at the center of political thought since Plato and Aristotle. Despite the aristocratic sentiments of the early Greeks, the Enlightenment philosophers saw the Greek ideal of universal reason as the basis of democracy and social progress. With the very notion of reason in question, how does the agenda of progressive education fare? How, in particular, does Giroux's agenda for "critical pedagogy," that is, "a pedagogy that links schooling to the imperatives of democracy, views teachers as engaged and transformative intellectuals, and makes the notion of democratic difference central to the organization of curriculum and the development of classroom practice"<sup>53</sup> fare, once it is seen as unsupported by a certifiable process that transcends power and caprice?

The solution is found in Giroux's concept of "border pedagogy." Rejecting critical pedagogy "overly shaped by the discourse of modernism...[i]ncreasingly reduced to a modernist emphasis on technique and procedures...focusing almost exclusively on issues of dialogue, process and exchange,"<sup>54</sup> the authors see critical pedagogy, and education in its name, as a "political, social and cultural enterprise. That is, as a form of engaged practice, critical pedagogy calls into question the forms of subordination that create inequities among different groups as they live out their lives." Critical pedagogy, in the sense that they recommend, "equates learning with the creation of critical citizens, rather than merely good ones...links schooling to the imperatives of democracy...and makes the notion of democratic difference central to the organization of curriculum and the development of classroom practice."<sup>55</sup>

Border pedagogy, as the authors develop it, rests upon two central concepts: difference and counter-memory (remembrance). Difference, or better the centrality of differences, is, perhaps, the central theme in postmodernism. Postmodernism focuses on the apparent differences within and among societies as a platform from which to reject "hegemonic and colonialist notions of worth and possibility,"<sup>56</sup> the "globalizing view that the industrialized Western countries constitute 'a legitimate center — a unique and superior position from which to establish control and to determine hierarchies.'"<sup>57</sup> Difference is not seen in the terms of liberal pluralism, "a pastiche of diverse interests with no commonality to hold them together." Thus, it is not to be seen as supporting the "liberal call to harmonize and resolve difference."<sup>58</sup> It must, rather, be seen in its relation to history viewed as a "dialogue among a variety of voices as they struggle within asymmetrical relations of power."<sup>59</sup> Differences must be seen as relative to "the social forms in which they are enunciated — that is, in relation to schools, workplaces, families, as well as in the relationship to the discourses of history, citizenship, sex, race, gender, and ethnicity."<sup>60</sup>

Such a view of difference informed through history, rejects traditions "valued for their claims to truth and authority...[as] an all-embracing view of life." Tradition, in that sense, must give way to difference articulated through counter-memory, "the fluid and complex identities that constitute the social and political construction of public life." Traditions are to be valued for their ability to place people "self-consciously in their histories by making them aware of the memories constituted in difference, struggle and hope."<sup>61</sup> Once so situated, individuals and groups can develop "new and emancipatory forms of political identity,"<sup>62</sup> with counter-memory "providing the grounds for self-representation and the struggle for justice and a democratic society."<sup>63</sup>

Counter-memory is the keystone in the edifice that the authors construct. It provides the "ethical and epistemological grounds for a politics of solidarity within difference. At one level, it situates the notion of difference and the primacy of the political firmly within the wider struggle for broadening and revitalizing democratic public life. At the same time, it strips reason of its universalist pretensions and recognizes the partiality of all points of view." But its centrality notwithstanding, its characteristics are never clearly stated. The particulars must be exhumed; and there are some clues. Remembrance, a form of counter-memory, "is directed more towards specificity and struggle; it resurrects the legacies of actions and happenings, it points to the multitude of voices that constitute the struggle over history and power." A part of a "language of public life," it "promotes an ongoing

dialogue between the past, present, and future...rooted in the need to bear witness to history, to reclaim that which must not be forgotten." It "attempts to create for students, the limits of any story that makes claims to predetermined endings, and to expose how the transgressions in those stories cause particular forms of suffering and hardship." In so doing, it attempts to provide "the grounds for self-representation and the struggle for justice and a democratic society," requiring a pedagogy in which "difference becomes a basis for solidarity and unity rather than for hierarchy, denigration, competition, and discrimination."<sup>64</sup>

It involves "engaging collectively with others within a pedagogical framework the helps to reterritorialize and rewrite the complex narratives that make up one's life." The authors see this as reflecting "an important theoretical issue[...].knowledge and power come together not merely to reaffirm difference but also to interrogate it, to open up broader theoretical considerations, to tease out its limitations, and to engage a vision of community in which student voices define themselves in terms of their distinct social formations and their broader collective hopes."<sup>65</sup> The goal: "redefining the importance of difference, while at the same time seeking articulations among subordinate groups and historically privileged groups committed to social transformations that deepen the possibility for radical democracy and human survival."<sup>66</sup>

What are we to make of all this? It seems clear that Giroux challenges both Paul and McPeck. Yet his position is consistent with Siegel's in so far as it commits us to reason giving as a fundamental practice. The difference lies in the sorts of reasons that Giroux brings to the fore. Reason, in some sense akin to both Paul's and McPeck's, is at the center of the educational enterprise for Siegel.<sup>67</sup> But it need not be. All Siegel's argument supports is the necessity of some overarching frame within which one assesses competing claims. This frame need not be the familiar epistemological theories that Paul and McPeck build upon. Nor need it be univocal. Siegel, after all, espouses pluralism.<sup>68</sup> Giroux offers an over-arching framework. It is social transformation towards radical and pluralist democracy. Giroux looks back to the Frankfurt School: "theory never aims simply at the increase of knowledge. Its goal is man's emancipation from slavery."<sup>69</sup> This is the unifying thread in critical pedagogy.

Siegel addresses theories like Giroux's, seeing them as committed to the view that education is essentially ideological, and subjecting them to a variant of his argument against relativism.<sup>70</sup> But he seems to overlook a fundamental issue. Siegel shows the necessity for some governing norms if justification is possible. Giroux need not disagree. But can Siegel grant what I take Giroux to require: ethical norms of justification in a role heretofore reserved for the purely epistemological? For Giroux the most essential reasons are those that social injustice and marginalization bring to the fore. It is these that constitute the essential framework to understand the failure of putative master narratives, totalizing meta-narratives rooted in elite disciplinary practices or in the "ordinary" language of the schools and the educated classes. Giroux sees all of these as subject to critique from the standpoints of those who remain outside and unattended: those Others "seen as a deficit... [whose humanity] is either cynically posited as problematic or ruthlessly denied."<sup>71</sup>

This is a profound epistemological move. It requires no less than that the true is to be defined in terms of the good. The basic epistemological thesis is that intuitions of injustice are more dialectically reliable than ordinary discourse or methodologically sanctioned inquiries.<sup>72</sup> How is this plausible? I offer the following as a clue.

Discourse frames, whether aristocratically construed in terms of special access, or liberally construed as generally available, are to be judged for their adequacy in terms of their ability to include without prejudice all points of view within their scope. This, of course, requires no more than inclusion. Views included may be judged inadequate for good reasons, but the systematic exclusion of a point of view indicates a structural failing in the discourse frame. This seems to be the key insight of, for example, feminism. It is the disregard of women's perspectives despite their

apparent availability that marks patriarchal frames as inadequate. It is the injustice that such disregard inspires that privileges the perspective from which the disregard can be seen and analyzed.

That is not to say that women's perspectives are necessarily correct; rather, it is to see them as dialectically invaluable, affording a deep critique of all those views from which they have proved to be unavailable. The resounding question is: How could purported master narratives have failed so abysmally to see what ought to be in common view? The injustice that resulted from the marginalization of women points to a pathology in discourse frames within which the injustice was invisible. Critique requires the interrogation of such discourse frames and the exposure of those elements that supported, whether unconsciously or with complicity, the disregard of blatant injustice.

This should not be confounded with classic Marxist views that see the experience of economic oppression to furnish a more adequate superstructure of narrative practices. Contemporary discussions expand the focus from the economically oppressed to include the socially marginalized; concern with economic malaise is broadened to include the unhappinesses of culture and of self. Moreover, racial, ethnic, class and gender exclusion are not issues peculiar to modernist, capitalist, or "first-world" societies. Exclusionary practices are endemic in societies of all sorts, reinvented as societies change, and they reflect issues of indefinite complexity and unfathomed depth. But yet there is the Marxist core. The experience of the contradictions in societies and unconscionable hiatuses in the discourse frames through which power and understanding are articulated is taken to be the key to meaningful critique. The excluded must be explained, and the injustices suffered through exclusion indemnified by confronting intellectual blindness and educational error. Right reason does not yield the true, for right reason is corrupted by interest. If my intuition serves me well, the confrontation with social injustice yields the essential epistemological probe for revealing the deep delusions of totalizing conceptual frames, delusions that, through their justification of marginalizing and repressive practices, testify to their inadequacy for rational, universal and cosmopolitan inquiry.

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey Siegel's position has been recently elaborated in two books: *Relativism Refuted* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1987), from now on referred to as RR, and *Educating Reason* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> My discussion will draw on "Border Pedagogy in the Age of Postmodernism," in *Postmodern Education*, ed. S. Aronowitz and H. Giroux (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1991), cited as PM. Also see his essays as well of those of others in *Postmodernism, Feminism and Cultural Politics*, ed. H. Giroux (Albany: SUNY). He first states his position in *Theory and Resistance in Education* (South Hadley, Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey, 1983). *Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) offers an influential critique of contemporary practice.

<sup>3</sup> John McPeck has elaborated his views in two books: *Critical Thinking and Education* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), cited in this text as CTE, and *Teaching Critical Thinking* (New York: Routledge, 1990), cited as TCT.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Paul has compiled his papers in *Critical Thinking* (Rohnert Park, California: CCTMC, 1990), cited as CT.

<sup>5</sup> CTE, 4.

<sup>6</sup> CTE, 13.

<sup>7</sup> CTE, 23-24.

<sup>8</sup> CTE, 155ff.

<sup>9</sup> TCT, 35, 48, 118.



<sup>10</sup> TCT., 31.

<sup>11</sup> TCT, 40.

<sup>12</sup> TCT, 48.

<sup>13</sup> TCT, 48.

<sup>14</sup> TCT, 41.

<sup>15</sup> TCT

<sup>16</sup> TCT, 41.

<sup>17</sup> TCT, 118.

<sup>18</sup> TCT

<sup>19</sup> TCT, 41.

<sup>20</sup> TCT. See also, CT, 108ff., *passim*.

<sup>21</sup> CT, 35ff., *passim*.

<sup>22</sup> CT, 35; and see also, 70ff.

<sup>23</sup> CT, 438.

<sup>24</sup> CT, 94.

<sup>25</sup> CT, 414.

<sup>26</sup> CT, 70.

<sup>27</sup> CT, 339.

<sup>28</sup> CT, 68ff.

<sup>29</sup> CT

<sup>30</sup> CT, 74-78.

<sup>31</sup> CT, 75-78.

<sup>32</sup> CT, 86, and see 69ff.

<sup>33</sup> CT, 73.

<sup>34</sup> CT

<sup>35</sup> CT, 74.

<sup>36</sup> CT, 80ff.

<sup>37</sup> CT, 78; also see chapter 34, "Critical Thinking and General Semantics: On the Primacy of Natural Languages."

<sup>38</sup> CT

<sup>39</sup> CT, 74-78.

<sup>40</sup> Paul identifies the virtues of intellectual courage, empathy, integrity, perseverance, faith in reason, fairmindedness, and humility as essential goals of critical thinking instruction. CT, 197; see also 32, *passim*.

<sup>41</sup> CT, 207.

<sup>42</sup> CT, 52, 197, passim.

<sup>43</sup> Habermas offers the “ideal speech situation” as the frame within which rational negotiation is to take place. It represents a discourse community where shared norms are a condition of “communicative action,” a requirement of “socially coordinated action” basic for the survival of the species. See, Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jurgen Habermas* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1988), 306-10 for an available summary of the position and its role in Habermas’ thought.

<sup>44</sup> RR, xiii.

<sup>45</sup> RR, 160ff.

<sup>46</sup> RR, 5; Plato, *Theatetus*, 171b, 171c.

<sup>47</sup> RR, 4-6.

<sup>48</sup> These include what he calls “framework relativism” (RR, 43ff), and various relativist or relativist tending philosophers, including Goodman (RR, 150ff), Meiland (RR, 18ff), and Field (RR, 29ff). The argument is used as a hedge against the Kuhn-inspired philosophers of science, including Kuhn himself, Doppolt and Brown (RR, chapter 3 through 5; for the critique of Brown, see RR, 115ff.), as well as philosophers he dubs “UnKuhnians,” in particular Toulmin and Laudan (RR, chapter 6).

<sup>49</sup> RR, 7-8.

<sup>50</sup> PM, 117.

<sup>51</sup> PM, 188.

<sup>52</sup> PM, 122.

<sup>53</sup> PM, 118.

<sup>54</sup> PM, 117.

<sup>55</sup> PM, 118.

<sup>56</sup> PM, 115.

<sup>57</sup> PM, 114, quoting N. Richard, “Postmodernism and the Periphery.”

<sup>58</sup> PM, 122.

<sup>59</sup> PM, 116.

<sup>60</sup> PM, 122.

<sup>61</sup> PM, 116.

<sup>62</sup> PM, 121.

<sup>63</sup> PM, 126.

<sup>64</sup> PM, 126-8.

<sup>65</sup> PM, 132.

<sup>66</sup> PM, 131-3.

<sup>67</sup> See *Educating Reason*, especially chapter 1.

<sup>68</sup> RR, 154; 163.

<sup>69</sup> *Theory and Resistance in Education*, 19, quoting Horkheimer.

<sup>70</sup> *Educating Reason*, chapter 4.

<sup>71</sup> PM, 128.

<sup>72</sup> PM, “Cultural Politics, Reading Formations, and the Role of Teachers and Public Intellectuals,” for the former; “The Punishment of Disciplines: Cultural Studies and the Transformation of Legitimate Knowledge,” for the latter.

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