RCP

Rethinking Critical Pedagogy

Volume 1

Issue 2

ISSN: 2717-8927

Oct 2020

Archive

(RCP) Rethinking Critical Pedagogy ISSN: 2717-8927

Volume-1, Issue-2, October 2020.

Post-Covid-19 and EU: Education for what citizenship?[1]

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Abstract

This paper examines the origins of the European COVID19 crisis under the lenses of the EU debt crisis and its neoliberal management. It analyzes how the austerity measures have contributed to the breakdown of the capabilities of national health systems to deal with the Covid19 crisis, with special focus on hard-hit Italy and Spain. It then examines the EU Next Generation Recovery Plan and how national interests have influenced the debate on how this should be shaped. At the end, it considers the challenges for EU citizenship education under these conditions. It concludes that, if there is to be any future of the EU project, the injustices and inequalities that are created by the structure of EU need to be addressed. Education cannot alone overcome the sentiments coming from the broken promises for mutual prosperity.

Keywords: *Covid-19, Europe, Neoliberalism, austerity, citizenship education.*

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[1] To cite this article:
Nikolakaki, M. (2020). Post-Covid-19 and EU: Education for what citizenship? *Rethinking Critical Pedagogy, 1*(2), 1-18.

INTRODUCTION

Neoliberalism, the current form of capitalism, has had a devastating effect on countries around the world during the coronavirus pandemic. The imposition of neoliberal austerity measures has crippled many basic functions of the states. Austerity measures means less spending on the social side, which translates to less money for health and education, and more pressure to sell these off into the private sector. As Vijay Prashad (2020) says:

> The problem with having health and education in the private sector is that these are designed for profit and not for the social good. Hospitals are run like any rental property. It is a waste of the asset if there is too much spare capacity, so that hospitals — like renters — drive an agenda for maximum occupancy. When there is a pandemic, there is simply no surge capacity in these lean and efficient (in terms of profit maximization) medical institutions.

The EU's focus on neoliberal structural reform has been a constant feature of its agenda since Maastricht. Education has been a part of that project. The Lisbon Agenda 2000 originally set out to make the EU "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world" by 2010. It included an economic pillar, a social pillar and an environmental pillar. In 2010 the Lisbon Agenda was re-launched as a new 10-year plan, the Europe 2020 strategy – "an agenda for new skills and jobs: to modernize labor markets by facilitating labor mobility and the development of skills throughout the lifecycle with a view to increasing labor participation and better matching labor supply and demand" (Clancy, 2020b).

In this paper, I examine the origins of the COVID19 crisis under the lenses of the EU debt crisis and its neoliberal management. I analyze how the austerity measures have contributed to the breakdown of the capabilities of national health systems to deal with the Covid19 crisis, with special focus on hard-hit Italy and Spain. I then examine the EU *Next Generation* Recovery Plan and how national interests have influenced the debate on how this should be shaped. At the end, I consider the challenges for EU citizenship education under these conditions. I

conclude that, if there is to be any future of the EU project, the injustices and inequalities, that are created by the structure of EU, need to be addressed. Education cannot alone overcome the sentiments coming from the broken promises for mutual prosperity.

EU debt crisis and the Eurozone

Neoliberal management under Germany's reign and the creation of the Eurozone has had its severe impact on many nation/states of EU. As Emma Clancy, (2020b) policy advisor for Irish Sinn Féin and the European United Left (GUE/NGL) in the European Parliament explains*:* "It will come as little surprise that a system designed to promote the mercantilist model of wage suppression, low inflation and export-led growth, propped up by a currency modeled on the Deutschmark, has benefited one country more than all other members of the Eurozone." In February 2019, the Centre for European Policy published an empirical study of the "winners and losers" from the euro twenty years after its introduction. It found that Germany was the big winner, having benefited by €1.9 trillion from the euro between 1999 and 2017, or around €23,000 per person. The Netherlands was the other state that gained substantial benefits from the common currency. France had lost €3.6 trillion or €56,000 per person; while Italy had lost more than any other state, at €4.3 trillion or €74,000 per person (Gasparotti et al. 2019). One of the main reasons for the drop in prosperity was international competitiveness due to the euro, according to the report. Before the introduction of the euro, countries were able to devalue their currencies to make their exports cheaper on the world market. "The problem of the divergent competitiveness of the Eurozone countries remains unsolved," the researchers Alessandro Gasparotti und Matthias Kullas wrote. As German MP for the European Parliament from De Lienke Martin Schirdewan, (2020) says: "The design of the Eurozone contributes to debt crises, while the debt and deficit rules enshrined in the Stability and Growth Pact enforce anti-worker and anti-growth policies."

> "Countries inside a common currency area cannot engage in competitive devaluations by devaluing their currency to make their exports more competitive. But they can implement policies domestically to bring about an internal devaluation – lowering their real exchange rate vis-à-vis their neighbors. The main way this takes place is by compressing or reducing

> wages, which causes prices to fall. Germany has consciously implemented this policy for several decades, at the expense of German workers, millions of who are working but living in poverty." (Clancy, 2020a, pg.48)

This devaluation of wage costs increased the competitive edge of selling industrial products within the EU. In reality, the European debt-crisis started with a trade deficit crisis within the Eurozone, which included Spain, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, and Greece. Within the Eurozone, trade-costs were reduced between countries, to increase overall trade volume. As a result, labor costs increased in peripheral countries relative to core countries (i.e., Germany), without compensating a rise in productivity, and thereby eroding their competitive edge. (Hale, 2013; Lapavitsas, 2018).

The transformation of private debt to public debt has devastated European economies. "The level of public debt in the EU was not caused by reckless government spending, but rather by the socialization of private debt through the rescue of the financial sector, and dramatic increases in the costs of borrowing due to "market discipline" linked to the ECB's failure to intervene. The pro-cyclical impact of the austerity programs imposed by the Troika not only limited growth but devastated the public services, including healthcare." (Schirdewan, 2020). The decision to save the banks has also destroyed much of solidarity between nations, since the blame is put between nations instead of the banking system.

For example, in 2009, the Debt-Crisis in Greece was blamed on Greek citizens who were collectively depicted as being 'lazy' and 'corrupt' (Skarpedas, 2015). Yet, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data show a picture of Greek workers that is far from lazy–declaring, for example, that the Greeks work the longest hours in EU (Coleman, 2015). German citizens can't explain why they seem to be bailing out the Greek debt while they fail to understand that it is the German and French banks that exploit all this money laundry system imposed on European states.

The Eurozone is creating debtor colonies. "The very concept of a debt colony is a nation-state that is situated at the lowest level of the EU governance chain, which comes with limited sovereignty and direct supervision by outsiders, rather than from

its own domestic decision-making system. Under such circumstances all internal political life/agendas are constantly influenced and co-shaped by powerful actors such as bureaucracy, financial capital and key member states through respective interventions" (Mikelis, 2016: p. 9). EU is leading to a post-democracy. According to Crouch (2016), a post-democratic society is one that continues to have and to use all the institutions of democracy, but in a way that they become increasingly a formal shell and into small circles of a politico-economic elite. It is a society marked by pernicious politics that have serious consequence for democracy. Post-democracy's authoritarianism ferments xenophobic movements claiming to represent those suffering from excessive change are indicative of in most authoritarian forms. While he argues that austerity itself is not evidence of post-democracy, it is the way that the crisis is handled that gives evidence of a drift towards post-democracy. As Crouch (2013) said:

> *First, the Anglo-American financial model that produced the crisis in the first place was designed by a politico-economic elite that corresponds to my concept, as bankers moved in and out of the revolving doors in Washington, designing policies to suit their firms. Then the management of the crisis itself was primarily a rescue operation for banks at the expense of the rest of the population. The most explicit expression of the post-democratic aspects of crisis management was the framing of the Greek austerity package, designed by international authorities in close collaboration with an association of leading bankers. But that was just the clearest case; less formal, similar groupings will be found in most political centers.*

Unless these issues are addressed the divide within EU will only grow bigger. Even if the EU discourse is one based on democracy, it won't take much more to figure how the impoverishment of states is being created by the existing disparities within EU.

EU coronavirus response

Among the more interesting figures of the pandemic is the number of deaths per million inhabitants per country. This number is probably more reliable than the case-fatality rate because deaths are less likely to be missed (ignoring for now the difficulty of defining deaths caused by SARS-CoV-2) and because the denominator, a

country's population, is known. (Caduff, 2020). According to the numbers for countries in EU as of 1st July 2020 are:

Spain: 606

Italy: 575

France: 457

Germany: 107

"At the outset of the pandemic, Germany had 28,000 intensive care beds, more than most of its neighboring countries. In recent days that has been raised to 40,000, as hospitals braced themselves for a huge influx of patients with Covid-19." (FT, 4/13/2020). Where medical care is easily accessible, staff sufficient and well-trained, and capacities are flexible, patients are more likely to receive better care and survive. The differences between deaths can be correlated to medical infrastructure. The European Commission had used the Stability and Growth Pact to "order member states to cut spending on, or privatize, healthcare services 63 times between 2011 and 2018. States were told to raise the pension age or cut funding to pensions 105 times over the same period." (Schirdewan, 2020).

The two EU countries most seriously hit by the Covid-19 are Italy and Spain. Both were among the strongest economies in the world before joining the Eurozone. In these countries, budgetary cuts for austerity reasons have led to substantial loss of life. In Italy, the austerity induced by the fiscal recovery plans has led to cuts that were harmful to health and survival. "The reform led to cuts in especially hospital capacity that reduced utilization which in many cases must have been essential use of services, as indicated by the rise in premature deaths of males and females." (Arca et al. 2020).) "Soon after the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis, Italian health spending relinquished its ten-year positive trend and began a gradual yet consistent decline. In 2012 the Italian government passed a series of decree laws reducing total public health financing by €900 million in 2012, €1.8 billion in 2013, and a further €2 billion in 2014, decreasing resources for essential medicines and the National Health Fund. Moreover, between 2009 and 2010, NSS (hospital) personnel were reduced" (De Falco 2018).

In Spain, EU neoliberal institutions have either steered the government towards policies that were incompatible with Spain's obligations to fulfill the right to health, or not done enough to mitigate potential human rights impact (Amnesty International, 2018). In the wake of the global financial crisis of 2019, the Spanish government began to cut spending on healthcare. Austerity measures included shifting the costs of certain products onto individuals, limiting the healthcare available to irregular migrants, and cutting spending on health workers, equipment and infrastructure. As UN document E/C.12/ESP/CO/6 (2018) describes:

> The Committee urges the State party to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the impact that the application of Royal Decree-Law No. 16/2012 has had on the right to the highest attainable standard of health, in order to make necessary adjustments to ensure the availability, accessibility, affordability, acceptability and quality of health-care services, including the repeal of provisions whose effect has been to weaken the protection of the right to health. (United Nations Human Rights 2018)

According to Amnesty International (2018): "Harsh austerity measures implemented by the Spanish government have had a devastating impact on some of the most economically vulnerable and marginalized people in society, resulting in unbearably long waiting lists and forcing patients to ration their medication to save costs."

During the peak of the coronavirus crisis, EU solidarity went out of the window. Each country looked over its own people, and there was no shared concern or joint care initiatives. Solidarity resources (human and medical equipment) over hard hit areas came from Cuba, China and Russia (Poggoli, 2020). Germany and France imposed limits on the export of protective medical equipment, some of which was badly needed but in short supply. German authorities issued a decree banning export of protective clothing and other medical gear such as gloves and masks. Such products could only be sold abroad in narrowly defined circumstances, such as an international aid effort, the order said. A government crisis team also established a centralized system for allocating scarce protective equipment to doctors, hospitals and federal authorities (NYT, 7/3/2020). Germany lost its opportunity to show leadership and justify its role within the EU.

Meanwhile the debt crisis has lead many Greek doctors searching for work abroad. More than 18,000 Greek doctors have moved abroad since the outbreak of the crisis, according to a study from the Athens Medical Association (ISA) (Bouloutza, 2019). This medical braindrain deprives poorer countries like Greece, Romania, Bulgaria from necessary human resources to deal with the covid-19 crisis. (Gillet, 2020).

That being said, Belgium is the world's worst affected country in terms of the number of deaths per head of population. For example, on 1 June 2020, it was reported that there had been 819 deaths per one million head of population. Steven van Gucht, head of viral diseases at the national health institute Sciensano, described in an interview with DW what he called as "radical transparency", counting even suspected cases of COVID-19 in the national death toll, regardless of whether the deceased person was tested. Belgian tourism officials have accused Professor Steven van Gucht of ruining their industry (DW, 2/6/2020).

EU's financial response

When the European Central Bank (ECB) told Eurozone finance ministers that the bloc may need fiscal measures worth up to 1.5 trillion euros to tackle the economic crisis caused by the Covid-19 epidemic, there was a big dispute between European states about where this money should come from. Germany, the Netherlands, and other northern European countries were ready to support EU measures worth 500 billion euros, while France, Italy and Spain said the European effort to tackle the crisis should be well above 1 trillion euros. The money announced by Merkel and Macron in April was little more than an extension of the existing European stability mechanism, designed to help individual countries in short-term emergencies. Even then, it was a mere third of what the European Central Bank had said was needed. What was specifically not agreed was any sharing of the economic burden of the pandemic across European treasuries. It was mostly more loans. (Jenkins, 10/4/2020). Southern countries hit harder supported to create Eurobonds, a common debt instrument issued by a European institution to raise funds on the market, with no sanctions connected to meet the needs of this unprecedented crisis

(Guarascio, 8/4/2020). Northern countries, the fiscally conservative 'Frugals', wanted to link the loans with austerity measures and disciplinary sanctions.

Meanwhile, Germany's constitutional court questioned whether the European Court of Justice (ECJ) should have ruled that the European Central Bank could, in effect, backstop the euro by buying debt. Separately, Poland has disputed the ECJ's precedence over its own supreme court. "The EU is built on law. If the stresses of the pandemic weaken the ECJ's foundations, the entire union will shake." (The Economist, 14/5/2020).

Following the discontent provoked by the unsatisfactory decisions made by Germany and France, in May 27 in what was described as the "Hamilton moment" of EU, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen proposed the creation of a 'Next Generation' European Union recovery fund worth €750 billion, to be raised by the Commission. Since ECB had ruled out Quantitative Easing which would be money with a form of a Eurobond, without being attached to austerity measures, the funds announced would be disbursed as €500bn in grants and €250bn in loans. In her Brussels speech, von der Leyen said the Next Generation fund would "sit on top of a revamped long-term EU budget of €1.1 trillion," bringing the new measures she was announcing to €1.85tn, on top of the earlier package of €540bn. "In sum, this would bring our recovery effort to a total of €2.4 trillion."
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_940

The New Recovery Plan is taking a step towards the European Green Deal (EGD) and Digital Economy to take EU capitalism to its next stage of sustainability. The covid19 breakout has created the opportunity for capitalism to reshape itself. Major corporations have thrown their weight behind green recovery goals. In June, investors managing a combined $12tn called for a green EU recovery plan; in July, major banks including Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan and even fossil fuel majors like BP have agreed to align their portfolio with the New Green Deal. "Frans Timmermans, the EU's Green Deal chief, specifically cautioned that EU support funds should avoid duplicating the activities of the corporations but encourage private investment through measures including contracts-for-difference that compensate investors for fluctuations in carbon prices." (Shrikanth, 2020).

The lockdowns of the economy will increase the debt within the euro-area reaching a new peak of 103%, while the Maastricht fiscal rules mandate this number to be at 60% for every Member State (European Commission, Spring Economic Forecast 2020). For Greece the debt will rise to an extraordinary 200%. A major disagreement point is the debate between the loans or grants form of the Recovery budgets. "Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland strongly persisted on the reduction of the grant balance, while the rest 22 Member States argued that using only loans would completely disregard the disproportionate effect the pandemic has had on health and socioeconomic issues, and would fail any hope of European solidarity." (Kattami, 2020, p. 14).

The funds raised will be repaid after 2027 and by 2058 at the latest, from future EU budgets. The loans will be repaid by the borrowing Member States. The revenue sources of the EU budget have remained the same over the last decades: customs duties, contributions from the Member States based on value added tax (VAT) and those based on gross national income (GNI). Other additional resources include: 1. Extension of the Emissions Trading System-based own resources to the maritime and aviation sectors to generate €10 billion per year 2. Carbon border adjustment mechanism to raise €5 billion to €14 billion per year 3. Own resource based on operations of companies, that draw huge benefits from the EU single market, which, depending on its design, could yield around €10 billion per year 4. Digital tax on companies with a global annual turnover of above €750 million to generate up to €1.3 billion per year. (EU budget: Funding the Recovery plan, 2020).

A breakdown of the numbers shows this is a serious distortion of reality. According to the Commission, "NEXT GENERATION EU" will raise money by temporarily lifting the own resources ceiling to 2.00% of EU Gross National Income, allowing the Commission to use its strong credit rating to borrow €750 billion on the financial markets. As Emma Clancy, (2020b) explains: "The von der Leyen proposal for a budget of €1.1tn is slightly higher than what is currently on the table at the

Council but still represents a retreat from the Commission's original proposal[2]. If we remove all the spin, the amount of real new funds from the EU for this recovery plan is €310bn. It is not an insignificant sum, and it has been welcomed by countries such as Italy and Spain. But it is nowhere near the €2.4 trillion touted by von der Leyen in her speech. Even the proposed €750bn in borrowing is in reality less than what was put forward in the German-French plan for €500bn in grants. Crunching the numbers, Eurointelligence estimates that the recovery element of the package amounts to an annual 0.56% of the EU's 2019 GDP, for four years."

These forced agreements cannot save EU from its internal contradictions. The European Council (EUCO) agreement of the 21st of July for the New Recovery Plan was realized under "the record-breaking negotiation duration of five days; came after a failed attempt at a political agreement in June; and was followed by a European Parliament resolution on the 23rd of July which did not accept the political agreement as it stands. Even though the latter is not legally binding, the Parliament has a veto right over the final EU long term budget, and its resolution has set the mood and the context for the upcoming trilogue negotiations between the Parliament, the Council and the Commission." (Kattami, 2020: p.12).

The COVID-19 crisis has brought an unprecedented challenge to the world and, in our examination, this also goes for EU. During the crisis each country tried to survive on its own means. They EU solidarity fell short to give any answers to national problems that in a big percentage came from the austerity measures and the lack of the monetary tools due to EU regulations, in order for each country to respond adequately to the crisis.

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[2] Which as proposed by Junker in 2018: "Overall, the Commission proposes a long-term budget of **€1,135 billion in commitments** (expressed in 2018 prices) over the period from 2021 to 2027, equivalent to **1.11% of the EU27's gross national income** (GNI)" https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_18_3570. The €1.1tn figure is the EU's long-term budget and it is false economics to be included in examining the specific responses to the coronavirus pandemic and related lockdowns. In addition to that, the EU's budget consists almost entirely of contributions from member states based on their GNI.

Education for what kind of citizenship?

Education has always been a key instrument of nation-building in new states. National education systems have typically been used to assimilate people of different origin; to promote established religious doctrines; to spread the standard form of national languages; and to forge national identities and national cultures. They helped construct the very subjectivities of citizenship, justifying the ways of the state to the people and the duties of the people to the state. (Green, 2013).

European educational systems have been charged with the responsibility of training European citizens about the European identity. European citizenship appears for the first time in the Maastricht Treaty (1992) among the main objectives of the Union: 'The Union shall set itself the following objectives: [...] to strengthen the protection of the rights and interests of the nationals of its Member States through the introduction of a citizenship of the Union' (Title I, art. B). Title II Part two establishes the 'Citizenship of the Union' stating that: 'Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union' (art. 8, 2). This identity formation of a member state becomes then the *conditio sine qua non* for European education. From Maastricht onwards, EU citizenship would be an accepted prerequisite in the design of policies of education. In 1992 in a document entitled New Prospects for Community Cultural Action the Commission stated the policy concisely:

> "Economic and social cohesion has been identified as a fundamental condition for the balanced development of the Community, and education and training have been identified as a crucial factor in achieving balanced social and economic development in all the Member States" (EC Commission, 1992: Pg 11-12).

Through Maastricht to the current arrangements, education policy for citizenship in practice in the EU would come to mean education exchanges, vocational training and language studies through a European dimension. (McCann, 2006). This generic definition of citizenship is stated in the European Commission's 2005 review of 'Citizenship Education at School in Europe' and offers a comprehensive summary of the subject:

"Citizenship involves enjoying rights and exercising responsibilities in various

> types of community. This way of seeing citizenship encompasses the specific idea of political participation by members of a democratic state. It also includes the more general notion that citizenship embraces a range of participatory activities, not all overtly political, that affect the welfare of communities… Citizenship is about making informed choices and decisions, and about taking action, individually and as part of collective processes" (EC, 2005: pg.14).

McCann, G & P. Finn (2006) observe that: "Across the European Union the principle of 'responsible citizenship' has moved towards a consensus on not only the individual's role in society, but also the role that education has to play in establishing a value for citizen participation."

The injustices and the hardship put on several countries have consequences on the trust that EU shares among EU citizens. According to the Eurobarometer (spring 2018) the trust in EU is going through significant changes. Out of 28 countries, majority in trust in EU is in15 EU Member States (down from 18 in autumn 2017), led by Lithuania (66%), Portugal and Denmark (both 57%). Conversely, a majority of respondents tend not to trust the EU in 13 countries, most strikingly in Greece (69%), the United Kingdom (57%) and Czech Republic (56%). Even though the trust in even the 15 countries is above the average, the mistrust is on high levels. According to European Commission's (2018) working paper: "Over the last decade, political parties opposed to EU integration have almost doubled their votes. The general opinion of the EU has also deteriorated, revealing a growing number of people who distrust the Union." Brexit can be understood under this prism.

The riddle of EU's future lays within a balanced distribution of economic gains and education. It is the elder and the wealthier who trust more EU. It is those with expectations that distrust their future on the European Union. "Hence, anti-EU voting reflects long-term economic trajectories; once this is controlled for, only education, density, and lack of employment go along with expectations" (EC, 2018:35). The need for a renewed social contract for through education in EU is an assignment of constructing the European identity. Unless this is created on economic justice, the EU project remains undemocratic in essence. As Thomas Fazi (2019) says: "EU's undemocratic architecture; rather, has to do with the very nature of

democracy itself. As the term suggests, and as history illustrates, democracy presupposes the existence of an underlying *demos* — a political community, usually (though not exclusively) defined by a shared and relatively homogenous language, culture, history, normative system, etc. — 'the majority of [whose members] feel sufficiently connected to each other to voluntarily commit to a democratic discourse and to a related decision-making process,' and therefore to accept the legitimacy of government and majority rule."'. The challenges lay ahead of us and the future lies in uncertainty.

EU's citizenship education can only succeed if citizens of nation states within the EU feel that there is justice and there is no exploitation of smaller and weaker countries from larger ones within the EU. The divide between North and South that has been created, has to be abolished. The consistent refusal of "Frugal" states to provide needed assistance to the EU South has provided the necessary justification for the bigger countries of EU, mainly Germany and France to avoid compensations. EU identity without solidarity between EU nations is a construction of a myth that is bound to fail.

CONCLUSIONS

Yet the future debt differences between EU countries over the coronavirus crisis will be big. The International Monetary Fund sees Greek debt rocketing almost 22 points to 200 percent of GDP this year, Italian almost 21 points to 156 percent and Spanish 18 points to more than 113 percent. France, Portugal and Belgium will also be badly hit. By contrast, Germany is expected to increase its debt by only 9 points to 69 percent and the Netherlands by 10 points to 58 percent. Austria, Finland, Slovakia and the Baltics will see similar or slightly bigger increases, but to much lower levels than southern states (Strupczewski, 2020).

Germany shows it has the upper hand in the EU and gains the most, while Merkel has often been announced by the media as "leader of the free world". According to The Economist "The single market is governed by strict rules limiting subsidies, but they have been suspended as governments pour €2trn ($2.2trn) into saving businesses from collapse from the Covid-19 crisis.

Half of this money is spent in Germany: this is a problem if you are a producer based in a country that cannot afford to be so generous, but which must accept German-made goods" (The Economist 2020). Meanwhile, there is a conflict of interest between EU states in general. EU's economy is second strongest in the world, after USA. Making the euro weaker helps Germany sell its products cheaper in the competitive markets. Weakened EU economies make the euro softer and the German industrialists stronger (Ivanovich, 2019).

While the working class in EU is being deprived the necessary means for its survival despite country of origin, this is creating a North/South divide while it is strengthening the power of German ruling class. Germany has been the country benefiting from the Eurozone (which started with 1 DM=1euro). European countries surrendering their monetary policies to ECB has been a huge failure leading to loss of sovereignty. Italy and Spain cannot print their own money and will now be exposed to a debt-neocolonialism like Greece, if the Eurozone and the ECB remain as is. It seems Greece, who has put all its public property on mortgage for 99 years and has its taxes collected by an institution directed by the Troika (AADE), was the neocolonial experiment to which other countries will follow. "Neocolonialism differs from standard globalization and development aid in that it typically results in a relationship of dependence, subservience, or financial obligation towards the neocolonialist nation. This may result in an undue degree of political control or spiraling debt obligations, functionally imitating the relationship of traditional colonialism" (Prashad, 2007).

If Education for European Identity is to succeed, it is essential for the EU to challenge injustices created within its structure, starting with the Eurozone. The COVID-19 crisis has put light to these, since it became a matter of life or death in different countries within the EU. Otherwise it would be another lost opportunity for creating a common European continent for peace. Can this European common space be achieved under capitalism? Lenin (1918) was not very optimistic when he said: 'From the standpoint of the economic conditions of imperialism—i.e., the export of capital arid the division of the world by the "advanced" and "civilized" colonial powers—a United States of Europe, under capitalism, is either impossible or reactionary.'

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(RCP) Rethinking Critical Pedagogy ***ISSN: 2717-8927***

Volume-1, Issue-2, October 2020.

RCP Interview series

To cite this interview: Antonia, D. (2020, 10 October). Critical Pedagogy. *Rethinking Critical Pedagogy* 1(2) (pg.19-33). Retrieved from http://mjura41.net/rethinking-critical-pedagogy-rcp/

An interview with Antonia Darder

Dr. Antonia Darder is a distinguished international Freirian scholar. She is a public intellectual, educator, writer, activist, and artist. She holds the Leavey Presidential Endowed Chair of Ethics and Moral Leadership at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles; is Distinguished Visiting Professor of Education at University of Johannesburg; and Professor Emerita of Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign. She is an American Educational Research Association Fellow and recipient of the American Educational Research Association Scholars of Color Lifetime Contribution Award, as well as the Freire Social Justice Award. Antonia has worked tirelessly for almost 40 years to fiercely counter social and material inequalities in schools and communities. The author of more than 20 books, her scholarship has consistently focused on issues of racism, political economy, social justice, education and society. Through her writings, she has extended the contributions of Paulo Freire to our understanding of inequalities in schools and society. Darder's critical theory of biculturalism links human development questions to issues of culture, power, and pedagogy. Through her decolonizing scholarship on the body, ethics, and methodology, she has contributed to rethinking questions of empowerment and liberation in the lives of subaltern populations. Beyond academia, she is a poet and visual artist.

Bülent Avcı: ***What is CP? Knowing that there are many lines of thoughts within CP, would it be possible to come up with an overall definition of CP?***

Antonia Darder: Critical pedagogy is a school of thought that emerged in the twentieth century. Shaped by a long tradition of critical social thought and progressive educational movements, critical pedagogy links the practice of schooling to democratic principles of society and to transformative social action. An underlying and explicit intent of critical pedagogy is a commitment to the unwavering liberation of oppressed populations and a belief in the historical possibility of societal change. Critical pedagogy also represents a significant attempt to bring together divergent radical views of education. Although, there is no recipe for the universal implementation and application of any form of critical pedagogy, its philosophical principles are founded on a critical theoretical tradition. Influential to its theoretical formation are major theorists of the Frankfurt School, along with Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas and Paulo Freire. Critical educational theorists drew upon the work of these thinkers to develop their notions of a critical pedagogy. Some of the most influential critical educational theorists include Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, and Michael Apple. However, since the 1990s, many educators, researchers, and theorist developed works that expanded on the foundational work of these critical theorist to address more deeply and specifically issues of culture, racism, gender, sexuality, disability, and the environment. The critical principles that loosely weave these different discussions together include cultural politics, the economy, the historicity of knowledge, dialectics, ideology and critique, the notion of hegemony, resistance and counter-hegemony, praxis, dialogue, and conscientization. It is then the combined engagement of these epistemological principles in the knowledge production of social questions of oppression that can be considered its conceptual lens for making sense of the world. Similarly, important critiques of critical pedagogy have been generated through efforts to flesh out the manner in which Western influences linked to these philosophical principles can unwittingly engender what Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls an abyssal divide within critical pedagogy, where anything that exists outside its domain is rendered invisible or simply considered irrelevant or non-existent.

Bülent Avcı: ***Whom should we consider as a critical educator/critical pedagogy researcher? If a teacher/educator/professor who writes books and publishes articles in journals, should he/she be regarded as a critical educator? Should we look at his /her teaching practices in the classroom?***

Antonia Darder: Given the definition provided above, teachers, researchers, and scholars who ascribe to the underlying tenets of critical pedagogical principles would be considered to be within the critical tradition. It is important here to recognize that beyond embracing the philosophical principles of critical pedagogy, key questions of classroom and community or popular education practices are key. The expectation here is that critical educators and researchers are practicing their labor, whether in the classroom, the community, or their personal lives, through enactment of critical consciousness. This is to say that they connect both their everyday lives and labor as teachers, researchers, or writers to a larger political project of liberation. Critical pedagogy cannot be enacted then in the classroom if an individual has not made a clear political commitment to integrity and coherence in her or his teaching or scholarly praxis, as well as relationships out in the world. This to say, that critical pedagogy must be a living pedagogy that extends beyond our labor in schools and communities into the arena of personal relationships. In my experience, many people may call themselves critical educators or researchers, but few seem able to live consistently a commitment to critical engage in thoughtful, humble, open, and loving ways. Nevertheless, I cannot sit here in judgment, pretending as if there is a recipe for laying out a set of standards by which the radical authenticity of all critical educators can be known. This would only replicate and reinforce dehumanizing forms of hierarchy and arrogance upon those whose lives I do not know nor understand. Instead, I would rather offer that we live and labor in a fundamentally unfree and violent world and, as such, we are daily confronted with oppressive forces, by way of exclusionary and repressive ideologies, policies, practices, and relational structures that systematically work counter to the evolution of critical or revolutionary educators. This, unfortunately, results in major conflicts, contradictions, and inconsistences among individuals who consider themselves committed to social justice within institutions, communities, and society. Moreover, it is an exceedingly Western patriarchal tendency to construct measurable hierarchies from which we can

pretend that people or the world in which we reside can be controlled. Instead, I would encourage each of us to be more reflective and aware of bringing personal commitment, integrity, and vigilance to our enactment of critical consciousness with the classroom and our relationships in the world. This can assist us to acknowledge our frailties and fragilities in the struggle for our humanity within educational and societal contexts—contexts driven fundamentally by the disgraceful ruthlessness of capitalist greed. Just as revolutionary struggles out in the world do not occur in a vacuum, neither does our formation as critical educators, researchers, or scholars. Hence, what we require in these very difficult times, more than ever, is the willingness to create genuine relationships of solidarity—relationships that can support our critical political and pedagogical formation within community. There is no way that we can profess to live and enact a critical pedagogy, if we exist and labor alienated from others and if our boots never touch the ground.

Bülent Avcı: Some scholars claim that CP researches/publications do not impact/disrupt neoliberal agendas: Instead it just helps them to advance their careers. Would you agree?

Antonia Darder: I have heard this criticism about critical pedagogy scholars for more than 30 years. Frankly, I prefer not to put my limited energies and time in being my critical sister or brother's keeper. I believe we have far more important labor before us. Not to mention, individuals who are primarily concerned with advancing their careers by publishing critical pedagogical scholarship would best seek other pastures. As someone who has been unswervingly committed to this arduous political project for more than three decades, I can confirm that there are psychologically distressed and politically contradictory people no matter where one tarries—whether in schools, universities, trade unions, or communities. So, why would it be different within the very small intellectual arena of critical pedagogy?

With respect to the usefulness of critical pedagogical publications, there are many politically committed people from different walks of life that sincerely appreciate and utilize the work of critical scholars who labor in consistent ways to disentangle the complexities of oppression within the context of advanced capitalism. In efforts to

disrupt the neoliberal agendas of our time, critical articulations that lay bare schemes related to racism, the privatization of education, the incarceration of impoverished and racialized populations, anti-immigrant politics, or the collapse of decent conditions of labor and wages have been and continue to be essential to revolutionary campaigns. However, radical scholarship alone will never bring down the structures of oppression. This can only be accomplished through the on-going collective organization of committed people at every level of society, who dare to utilize their labor to denounce tyranny, by proclaiming a revolutionary vision of social justice, economic democracy, and collective human rights.

Bülent Avcı: ***Should we openly discuss these different lines of thoughts in CP or would this be more harm than good to CP? Our journal, RCP (rethinking critical pedagogy), aims to be a democratic platform for this kind of CP discussions.***

Antonia Darder: I believe that what should set critical pedagogy apart is the willingness to engage with a wide variety of perspectives and critiques generated within and outside the field. That is to say, we cannot pretend to be liberatory in our praxis and simultaneously silence perspectives with which we disagree. Moreover, we must mobilize our democratic capacities to engage with greater openness, curiosity, and solidarity the many differences and disagreements that emerge, given the multiplicity of perspectives at work in the world. This is not so that we can somehow arrive to one claim of absolute truth or an ultimate position, but rather so that we can more forthrightly acknowledge the importance and even democratic necessity of different ways of knowing and being in the world, which result in the diverse positionalities and histories that have shaped and influenced our understanding of education and society. I do not believe it is harmful to consider thoughtfully the differences in our perspectives, particularly when we take the time to engage carefully the human consequences to mind, body, heart and spirit associated with our different views and the practices these engender, particularly with respect to the transformations of schools and societies. Therefore, I very much support and appreciate the efforts of *Rethinking Critical Pedagogy* to bring different and contesting views of critical pedagogy into conversation with one another, particularly

when these views are expressed with love, respect, faith, and a genuine intent to build solidarity across our differences.

Bülent Avcı*: CP is often criticized that it is too abstract (opaque) and non-practical. Let's say you visit a high school or college and are supposed to visit some classrooms and observe teachers as they teach. What kinds of pedagogical dynamics would you focus on to find out the oppressive and liberating aspects of these teachers' professional practices?*

Antonia Darder: The philosophical principles or foundations of any educational school of thought can seem abstract if discussed solely with respect to theory. To move from the analytical or conceptual dimensions of critical pedagogy, we must then move, as you suggest, within the actual arena where a liberatory pedagogy is practiced. In your question, you speak of observing teachers within schools. Here are some very brief reflections I can offer regarding the assessment of a critical pedagogical classroom.

Context: Prior to observing teachers within a classroom, it is vital to have some understanding of the power dynamics, resources, and limitations at work in the context in which a teacher is laboring. What are the school expectations and purpose? Who are the students? What are characteristics of the community in which the school is located. Teaching in a school, for example, within Turkey or Palestine would be far different than teaching in a metropolitan school in the United Kingdom or the United States. By understanding the cultural politics, economics, and history of the educational context, you will have a better sense of the actual conditions under which a teacher must carry out her or his labor. With an understanding of the context, you will observe the teacher with a greater sense of grounded understanding as to why the teacher may enact particularly pedagogical activities or approaches.

Teacher-Student Relational Dynamics: That said, one of the primary aspects that interests me in my observation of a teacher is to access the relational dynamic that seems to be at work in his or her relationship with the students. Do students seem at ease? Do students seem comfortable asking questions? Does the teacher elaborate on students' questions and insights in ways that ground students' engagement with the

topic of discussion? Does the teacher redirect the movement of the discussion in ways that integrate students' questions and insights and provide them ample room to connect their learning to their everyday lives?

Pedagogical Engagement: Pedagogical engagement or process is one of the most essential aspects that distinguish critical pedagogy from what Paulo Freire called *banking education*. Traditional pedagogies employ authoritarian approaches that place priority on competitive student learning as an individual phenomenon. In addition, the tendency is to encourage students to focus on material to be memorized and regurgitated, rather than to engage critically with curricular material in ways that ask them to consider carefully its meaning in terms of their own lives and communities. Hence, observation of the pedagogical engagement of students is significant to assessment. Does the teacher engage students in ways that provoke open dialogue among each other and dialogue with the teacher, as well? Are there classroom opportunities for students to engage the material with one another in small groups, so they can practice being communally active in the democratic process of knowledge production? What activities are included that provide students opportunities to ground their learning in their world, outside the classroom? Are students given concrete opportunities to move the direction of the classroom learning or dialogue?

Curriculum: Is there evidence that students participate in learning and designing the curriculum or activities associated with their classroom learning? If the community is bilingual, are there opportunities for students to speak and study in their language of origin? Is there evidence that parents and community members are involved consistently in the process of students' educational formation? Are music, dance or other cultural art forms from students' communities integrated into their learning?

Classroom Environment: Another important part of such an assessment would have to do with the classroom environment itself. Does the classroom seem to reflect the students in the room? Do the items on bulletin boards or the walls reflect the labor of students and teacher in collaboration? Do pictures or artefacts reflect the students' cultural community backgrounds and everyday life? Is there evidence that students have participated in contributing to the classroom environment? How is the furniture

arranged? Does it seem easy for students to participle in group interaction on their own?

Bülent Avcı: ***CP scholars teach in neoliberal universities; at the same time they are critical of neoliberalism? It must be very difficult for scholars to work this way. What are the major problems today CP academics face and have to cope with?***

Antonia Darder: One of the most pervasive manifestations of the neoliberal university is the alteration of the academic labor force, as university management and administrators seek to balance budgets or retain surpluses for future capital expenditures. These changes prioritize precarious, short-term, contracted and part-time employment. Universities have long employed a mix of permanent, tenured, and tenure-track academics, and contracted part-time and casual labor, particularly using adjunct or casual labor to cover unmet teaching needs. This shifting emphasis in favor of relatively cheaper and more 'flexible' casual employment has intensified to the point that neoliberal universities openly and blatantly advance policies and practices that privilege the aims of the powerful and wealthy.

For example, if you are a professor in the humanities, you will find few funding sources for research that provide support for liberatory forms of social critique. Meanwhile, the disciplines tethered to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (which are most traditionally positivist and acritical in their orientation) receive the lion share of the available funding and opportunities. Similarly, the hiring requirements for entering university professors with tenure has become more and more challenging. Where new positions exist, there is generally a focus on finding candidates who have many peer-reviewed journal articles already published by the time they graduate from a doctoral program and who can also demonstrate they are capable of raising funds for future research projects. These two requirements are employed to deceptively sift and sort tenure-track faculty candidates and eliminate from the pool those who have had lesser opportunities during their formation. In this way, candidates from racialized and working-class communities who might be considered more problematic to neoliberal aims can be "legitimately" eliminated,

while those candidates who come from privileged backgrounds and/or have attended more wealthy prestige universities are bound to make it to the final candidate list.

In tandem, these phenomena work to limit contesting discourses within the university and perpetuate policies and practices meant to more aggressively control faculty labor and undermine dissent. In these and many other ways, the neoliberal environment of the university negates the very principles of critical pedagogical labor, which is meant to open the field of critical engagement and to promote a humanizing educational agenda in the interest of emancipation. The consequence today is that senior professors who are critical scholars find themselves more and more marginalized with respect to the life of the university. Often our work and perspectives are deemed idealistic and out of touch with a world where the major objective of schooling is the vocationalization of working-class students and the ultimate aim of university education is to advance greater control over knowledge production across the disciplines. Rather than the university existing as an open and progressive arena for intellectual formation for both professors and students, it has become more and more an arena of vulgar professionalization, which narrow what is considered legitimate knowledge or valid research. Research projects or participatory research activities aimed at critically addressing the actual needs of communities or labor organizations, for example, are often viewed with disdain and suspicion and deemed "activist research"—a euphemism used to discredit the voracity of critical research claims.

Bülent Avcı: ***In times of corona-virus, online-distance learning became a popular topic in educational discussions. How should we understand the oppressive and liberating aspects of distance-online schooling?***

Antonia Darder: The proliferation of on-line-distance learning is an issue that certainly raises concerns in the new educational normal, along with the wide marketization of piecemeal curricula to accommodate disembodied conditions of virtual learning. For critical educators, classroom conditions of democratic education provide opportunities for students to critically grapple together across their differences and similarities, in an effort to learn, communicate, and transform inequalities and exclusions within the complexity of their diverse humanity. Vital to such an intellectual formation is the creative tension necessary to unfold lively

relationships, which are best enacted through their embodied presence within the realities of everyday.

Given the stark separation and virtualized conditions of the new educational normal, students are expected to function in ways that, more than ever, disembody their learning. Instead of dynamic classroom dialogues so crucial to a question-posing critical pedagogy, students are expected to learn within lonely on-line spaces, where they must respond to prescribed and standardized forms of curriculum developed and designed for them by experts, without student participation or input. Moreover, these virtual spaces reinforce a learning based on an individualized focus, memorization, and quantification. Instead of students being immersed in evolving social processes of critical engagement, the development of voice, and the construction of participatory knowledge, they are conditioned away from the human contact, social interaction, and the ethics of empathy so essential to democratic life

Similarly, we must be concerned with the manner in which teaching in the new educational normal disfigures the labor of teachers. In the virtual classroom, the difficult labor of teachers now becomes even more routinized and tediously disembodied than previously, as teachers are expected to function as technological mediators, dispensers, and agents of a growing virtualized educational culture. No doubt, this points to the dangers of a deeply technocratic educational culture that initiates students into a commonsense acceptance of technological surveillance as a way of life. Here, we are well reminded that every historical instance of fascistic politics in this country or abroad—whether the tracing of suspected gang youth in the U.S. or the tracking of dissidents by the Pinochet regime in Chile—has been undertaken through systematic surveillance of youth, utilized as a means to trample dissent.

The liberating aspects of on-line teaching is a subject that I find difficult to speak to, because I fundamentally believe that student learning is deeply impoverished by such a form of education, despite the many critical educators who would retort that they have found ways to teach in a liberating manner. There is, for example, the assertion that on-line teaching makes education available for more students and hence, serves as a democratizing force. This strikes me as a discourse of apologia for on-line learning because we are now forced to move to this virtualizing educational form and,

as such, may inadvertently find ourselves trapped into virtual teaching, given that far less resources are required and greater profit can be garnered in the long run.

Bülent Avcı: ***Education faculties and colleges of teacher education in the USA have been colonized by neoliberal policy and implementations. The majority of new teachers have never heard about CP. Do you think that something can be done to reach out to pre-service and in-service teachers who are frustrated with market-driven changes in education, and looking for alternative approaches to it?***

Antonia Darder: This colonizing phenomenon could be addressed by a scholarly stress on greater community participation and the use of popular education methods for initiating new teachers into critical pedagogical praxis. What I am suggesting is the development of revolutionary movement work that focuses, in particular, on the needs of new teachers. This would serve as on-going teaching collectives or community teaching networks that function outside of the purview or control of teacher education programs. Unfortunately, a problem within capitalist societies is that people have seldom developed a strong sense of participating in political labor or working with others communally as part of their on-going democratic participation. This refer to public collective work done outside of the traditional institutions that have created or perpetuated many of the problems we are struggling to transform in education.

Establishing independent popular teacher collectives that focus on supporting new teachers and providing them an on-going pedagogical space for reflection, dialogue, and building community would go a long way to activating critical pedagogical praxis on the ground. Some excellent examples, of work done outside the traditional educational establishment include the recent labor of critical educators in teachers' unions such as the Chicago Teachers Union and United Teachers of Los Angeles, who worked with students, parents, small businesses, and community members beforehand and during strike actions that brought about some important changes to the conditions of teachers, beyond solely increases in wages. Yet, much more work must still be done by teachers' unions and social movement organizations to address the pedagogical and political needs of young teachers who must work within conditions that betray their commitments to a socially just world. Also important is a larger political effort to link the work of teachers with a variety of community

campaigns and national actions focused on a variety of critical issues outside of education (i.e., health, housing, immigration, incarceration, etc.)—issues that in very fundamental ways impact the well-being of teachers, students, parents and communities.

Bülent Avcı: ***Neoliberal advocacy groups have been promoting STEM education. How should we understand STEM campaigns? Could this be another tactic stage of the neoliberal colonization of education?***

Antonia Darder: I firmly believe that the wide spread promotion of STEM is a counterrevolutionary move by the right meant to suppress more critical academic fields, where open engagement with larger human issues, particularly with respect to politics, poverty, and racialized inequalities, would be more likely to be debated. I have watched, over the last 30 years, the manner in which STEM, as a project under neoliberalism, has moved toward the expansion of a scientism, where problems are deeply focalized and divorced of context and absolute and abstracted solutions are presented as panaceas. We see this, in particular, in the ecological arena of so-called natural disasters, where both human and planetary extractive practices by transnational corporations responsible for climate change are ignored, while privatizing capital schemes are funded to protect the interest of the powerful. In universities, education students are corralled into the STEM field with the promise of prestige, resources, and jobs. Yet, according to recent research in the field, over 50% of STEM jobs do not even require a bachelors' degree. Hence, I would agree that this phenomenon is, indeed, another tactic of neoliberal colonization of education. However, we must also recognize that the current ideological dominance toward STEM is actually only an intensification of the wretched scientism of the last century, which has driven oppressive policies and practices of exclusion in education. To ignore the manner in which the pernicious rhetoric of scientism (i.e., evidence-based rhetoric) narrows our understanding of the world and how we seek solutions to human suffering, unfortunately, clouds our political and pedagogical reasoning, trapping us in a bankrupt ideology that leaves the underlying roots of oppression untouched.

Bülent Avcı: ***Neoliberal ideology has shaped education over the last 30-40 years. Some think that neoliberal ideology outlived and will soon disappear. And others disagree saying that as long as opponents of neoliberal ideology come up with viable alternatives at local, regional and global levels, neoliberal hegemony will not go away. What do you think about this matter?***

Antonia Darder: The current encroachment of neoliberalism into education is not a new phenomenon but rather the current face of the larger capitalist enterprise. As such, neoliberal educational reform must be properly understood as an extension of the greater hegemonic apparatus of the capitalist state. This is to say, it is bred through what Antonio Gramsci termed *hegemony*, where general consent is given by the masses to the general direction imposed on social life by the ruling elite. In the U.S. educational arena, neoliberal policies emerged furiously and persistently on the heels of the 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report. In response to one of its basic tenets—schools should function as economic engines for the national economy—an unbridled process of ruthless privatization unfolded, while mean-spirited rhetoric of failing public schools shattered progressive educational efforts that had barely begun to take hold. Accordingly, neoliberal advocates and conservatives alike went after public education with a vengeance, resurrecting victim-blaming accountability discourses of the 60s and 70s and employing former political tactics to disrupt the progress of both the labor and civil rights movements of the time.

I would argue then that as long as we are embroiled in this ruthless system of capitalist accumulation and a racializing political vision founded on the interests of the ruling class—locally, regionally, and globally—capitalism's authoritarian rule, under the guise of neoliberalism (or whatever new term is employed), will continue to thwart our liberatory educational efforts. This to say, as long as the greed and barbarity of capitalism persists, the educational system will remain hostile, adverse, and negating of critical pedagogical aims within schools and communities. What we are contending with is a political economy where fierce profit motives undermine the genuine human needs of people. Moreover, what the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted for us so clearly is the manner in which the transnational policies and practices of capitalism have raped the planet and resulted in an astonishing rate of impoverishment around the world.

Bülent Avcı: ***Can the CP community (if there is any) organize/mobilize and make historic moves? For example, can they initiate a global research center or university or K-12 schools to demonstrate what kind of education they want? Is it an attainable goal at this stage?***

Antonia Darder: The critical pedagogy community should, indeed, organize and mobilize worldwide *with* and in the interest of the most oppressed communities. However, this requires that we rethink the manner in which we labor, how we define problems, and the tendency toward fragmented approaches in education, even on the left. For years, I have witnessed the inability of critical education scholars to fully divorce ourselves from the mainstream competitive pursuit of university accolades, prestige, and resources. Despite all the talk about solidarity and transformation, we have done so very little to shift the expectations or practices within our own spheres of influence. There is no question that to do this would be, indeed, a very difficult task, given the brutal conditions under which we labor within the university. However, there have been important moments where opportunities have arisen to do things differently and critical scholars have failed miserably to garner the courage and moral commitment to fight for real change. The consequence is that we remain compromised and unable to extricate ourselves from the whims of university expectations.

Moreover, given the small arena that is critical pedagogy, our wretched tendency to deal with comrades as competitors rather than as comrades has led to many missed opportunities to mobilize in tangible and effective ways. Yet, despite that fact that there is little prestige, resources, or accolades to be gained from mainstream institutions for our pedagogical work out in communities or within social and labor movement organizations, this is exactly where critical pedagogy as a movement for a humanizing liberatory education should be developing our work with students, comrades, and communities. Historic moves that can potentially shift the direction of societies can only be achieved through unifying progressive forces for change. We have seen examples of this in the work of the Zapatista in Chiapas, Mexico and the Black Lives Matters movement. To build an effective critical pedagogy movement would entail that scholars, researchers, and teachers bring their political and pedagogical understanding and emancipatory approaches to the work of labor unions,

social movement organizations, and other progressive campaigns, where people are committed to fighting for their self-determination, economic justice, and collective human rights. All this, however, will remain impossible, if we fail to come together democratically and in solidarity, in order to transform the deep structures of oppression that persist not only in schools and universities, but within the societies in which we struggle daily to live, labor, love, and dream.

(RCP) *Rethinking Critical Pedagogy* ISSN: 2717-8927

Volume-1, Issue-2, October 2020.

The Potential and Limitations of Critical Race Theory[3]

Bülent Avcı

Abstract

This article examines the potentials and limitations of critical race theory in terms of its capacity to foster a more just, free, and democratic society. The article analyzes impacts of critical race theory on education as well as the daily life of citizens. The article argues that from 1980 onward, the anti-racist movement in the U.S. lost its revolutionary vision and became domesticated. The article concludes that critical race theory is not revolutionary but a petit bourgeois standpoint.

Key Words: *critical race theory, critical theory, race, class, equality, justice, capitalism and education.*

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[3] To cite this article:

Avcı, B. (2020). The potential and limitations of critical race theory. *Rethinking Critical Pedagogy, 1*(2), 34-47.

INTRODUCTION

The police killing of George Floyd in May 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, triggered anti-racist protests in the U.S. and other countries around the world. This movement popularized discussions of race, racial relations, racism, equity, and justice in education as well as in other domains. With few exceptions, it seems that critical race theory (CRT) largely shapes perceptions of anti-racism and informs and inspires movements such as Black Lives Matter (BLM). In this article, I discuss the potentials and limitations of CRT.

Anti-racist movements in the U.S. made historically progressive gains and created significant cracks in hegemony of racist discourse in 1960s and 1970s. When we review the rhetoric and political practices of leading figures of these struggles such as Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, we see that the social, political, and economic structures of the system were central to their criticism and political actions: they were radicals (Howard-Pitney, Davis, & May, 2004). In other words, the anti-racist movement at that time was part of a larger straggle toward freedom, equality, and justice for all (Reed, 2020). However, since the early 1980s, the anti-racist movement lost its momentum and larger emancipatory vision. In academic studies in the 1990s, especially, race became a primary unit of analysis with an unclear political vision. Simultaneously, in the social sciences and humanities, *class* as an identity marker seemed to be forgotten (Avcı, 2019; Gottesman, 2016; Orlowski, 2012). A set of political events at global scale led to this domestication process of anti-racist theory and practices.

After the de facto failure of Bolshevik revolution 1980s, Marxism lost its prestige among intellectual circles and in academia. As neoliberalism became the dominant ideology starting from about 1980, Weberian[4] notions of status, identity, and lifestyle replaced the Marxist concept of socioeconomic class to analyze, understand, and change society: based on this Weberian perspective, CRT in the academic world emerged and has been largely promoted by bourgeois scholars as it serves bourgeois interests and keeps the debate about inequality and justice confined

[4] For a brief information about Weber's identity politics: https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789047443780/Bej.9789004179486.i-252_005.xml

to the limits of the neoliberal (capitalist) system. It is no coincidence that bourgeois scholars are fierce supporters of an ideology (CRT) that covers a list of oppressions, which somehow misses class exploitation entirely off the list.

CRT defines racism as a problem of White individuals; it takes race as the prime unit of analysis to understand oppression, inequality, racism, and unjust racial relations. CRT largely ignores the concept of class: while informed by identity politics, CRT also resonates with neoliberal ideology, which separates politics from the economy. Refusing to define anything at the societal level, neoliberal ideology considers everything at the individual level (Ventura, 2012).

As CRT gained popularity, it received criticism from Marxian scholars, who contend that:

> CRT problematically priorities race over class, fails to account for the political-economic foundations of racial inequities and racialized process, and focuses on White supremacy as the explanation of the persistent oppression of people of color, without due attention to the impact of capitalism and market forces. (Dumas, 2013, p. 114)

Drawing on my lived experiences as an educator, I will elaborate on the criticisms made by Marxian scholars to answer the following questions: (a) Can CRT lead to radical, long-lasting solutions to racism? (b) Is CRT revolutionary or reformist-conservative in ideology? (c) What are the Marxian arguments critical of CRT?

MAIN ARGUMENTS OF CRT

Although a number of scholars contributed to the formation of CRT, historically CRT overall includes five basic tenets: (1) Interest convergence: the demands of Black people would be met only if that particular action also serves White interests (Lynn, Jennings, & Hughes, 2013); (2) Whiteness as property: the existing legal system protects White interests; Whiteness controls economic, social, and political power relations in the U.S. (Harris, 1993); (3) White supremacy: the concept

of White supremacy is derived from the view that the structure of American society is based on Whiteness, which operates on different levels; because all White people benefit from Whiteness, by definition, all White people are potentially racist. From a CRT perspective, racism is a permanent driving force of society: it is a totalizing concept (Annamma, 2015; Hiraldo, 2010); (4) Story-telling and counternarratives: individuals' lived experience as recounted in their narratives can "undermine the claim of racial neutrality of traditional legal discourse and reveal that racism and racial discrimination are neither aberrant nor occasional parts of the lives of people of color" (Lynn & Dixson, 2013, p. 9); (5) Critique of liberalism: this tenet challenges the notions of color blindness, neutrality of law, and equal opportunity of all (Hiraldo, 2010).

In addition, CRT developed the concept of "intersectionality": drawing on identity politics, CRT claims that although race is the prime unit of analysis, racial identities and racism intersect with other subordinated identities, such as gender, religion, sexual orientation, and the like. As such, the concept of socioeconomic class is given less emphasis; indeed, it rarely appears in CRT analyses. In other words, class and other identities are analyzed in relation to race and racism.

CRITIQUE OF CRT

Marxism is a revolutionary ideology that is committed to fight against exploitation, oppression, and discrimination rooted in capitalism; it envisions a world without borders and classes. By definition, the Marxian approach includes an anti-racist and anti-fascist agenda as part of its larger sociopolitical and economic struggle oriented toward equality, justice, and freedom (Kellner, 1989). Long before CRT, Marxism recognized race and racism in its analysis of capitalism: he wrote, "Labor in the white skin cannot be free if in the black it is branded" (Marx, 1867, p.301). Marxism took an anti-racist stance as part of a larger emancipatory movement against capitalism and toward equality, justice, and freedom. In this sense, there has been ongoing debate between Marxian theorists-academicians and CRT scholars. CRT has been criticized on three major points (Cole, 2009).

First, Marxian scholars argue that race itself does not provide a sufficient theoretical base to explain inequality and injustice. Drawing on critical theory (CT), Marxian scholars assert that the class, not race, is the central and global concept necessary to explain the human condition, encompassing oppression, equality, and freedom (Darder & Torres, 2009). The foundation of power relations and social and economic inequalities are embedded in capitalism. Under the neoliberal capitalist world order, workers worldwide—regardless of their race or other identities—are subject to exploitation. Taking class as the prime unit of analysis, Marxism directly takes race into its structure of analysis as a form of exploitation and oppression (Cole, 2009). In that structure, the capital-forming effects of racism are clearly defined.

CT provides a theory of capitalism that starts with economic categories "precisely because the economy plays a constitutive role within all areas of social life and provides the framework for developing a theory of society" (Kellner, 1989, p. 47). CT uses totalizing concepts, such as commodity, money, value, and exchange, to describe a (neoliberal) capitalist society that "attempts to impose its values, structures and practices throughout society" (p. 47). By doing so, CT provides a theory that explains the substructure and superstructure of society and the relation between them and provides a theory of life after capitalism (Bendix, 1974).

Second, Marxian scholars are highly critical of identity politics and therefore take issue with the notion of intersectionality in CRT. For CRT, race is the prime unit of analysis: class is given the same importance as sex, gender, or ethnic identity. Clearly, CRT scholars do not understand or accept the constitutive power of class, whereas Marxian scholars, as Dumas (2013) writes, "reject the idea that class is an identity akin to a range of others" (p. 116). CRT not only misunderstands the concept of class, but also the links between identities and capitalism itself. Darder and Torres (2004) explain that the way in which the concept of intersectionality is structured disregards "the fact that notions of identity result from a process of identification with a particular configuration of historically lived or transferred social arrangements and practices tied to material conditions of actual or imagined survival" (p. 106). Using the notion of intersectionality, CRT fails to connect the political and economic

spheres, which results in deemphasizing class exploitation rooted in capitalism. Thus, as Cole (2009) shows, CRT, with its race-based analysis, has neither the desire nor the capacity to fight capitalism.

Third, CRT's focus on White supremacy is another point that draws Marxian scholars' criticism. The binary approach divides people into two—White and non-White—along with the claim that Whites benefit from White supremacy one way or another. However, CRT fails to recognize the fact that in today's society, neither Whites nor Blacks are a homogenous community (Darder & Torres, 2004); they both are culturally, ethnically, religiously, and socioeconomically diverse. In the U.S., the majority of Whites come from the working class that has been and still is exploited by capitalism. The same holds true for the Black community.

In today's America, Black people are divided into different social classes: there are working class Black people, middle class Black people, and upper class Black people, as well as immigrant Black people. In contrast to the 1960s and 70s, today Black people seem to be able to take up important academic, bureaucratic, cultural, and political[5] positions in society. Needless to say, the class division is also reality for White people: ruling class–White elites of course benefit from the existing system. That is, neither Black nor White communities are homogenous. Ignoring this fact by using the notion of White supremacy, CRT claims, without any substantiation, that all Whites are potentially racist. This claim not only alienates poor and working class Whites, but also prevents them from organizing a united front against fascism.

As for White privilege in relation to capitalist society, what CRT fails to understand can be illustrated through an example. Suppose a Black worker gets paid $8 per hour and with the similar conditions, a White worker gets $10. As part of a divide-and-conquer strategy, the system's message here to the White worker is that "Perhaps your pay is not very good, but at least it's better than a Black worker's." In the name of equity and justice, CRT suggests that if the Black worker gets paid the same as the White worker, then justice is served. CRT assumes that the White

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[5] For example, Barack Obama was President (highest elected position) and Condoleezza Rice was Secretary of State (highest appointed position).

worker's pay is fair and reasonable. The Marxist perspective, on the other hand, argues that both workers' labor is exploited: they should be getting paid $25 or so.[6] Therefore, it suggests that Black and White workers should get together based on their socioeconomic background to fight against the common enemy—the capitalist ruling class—to create more equal, just, and free world.

As the example above illustrates, capitalism uses racism for capital accumulation and to maintain its ideological and political domination. CRT's position is to blame the White worker without problematizing the capitalist mode of production and its exploitative and oppressive economic politics; this standpoint pits White and Black working class people against one another, to the advantage of the capitalist ruling class. On the other hand, Marxist perspective, as a project of emancipation and liberation, critically examines capitalism as the root cause of exploitation and oppression. It envisions a life after capitalism where there is a material ground for brotherhood/sisterhood of all people regardless of their background.

CRT IN EDUCATION

The same ambiguity and lack of strategy in CRT is also visible in the education literature. CRT references White students' statistics to indicate inequality and injustice in education: As I have indicated elsewhere, CRT simply demands that "Black students should have equal opportunities with White students. Which White students? Do all White students have the same opportunity?" (Avcı, 2019, p. 50). When we compare poor Black and White students' academic success, there is not much difference; there is, however, a clear gap between students in well-off schools and those who go to school in poor areas. The real gap in America exists between schools in poor neighborhoods and schools in the middle and upper middle class areas. In other words, socioeconomic inequality—poverty—is the main predictor of students' academic success and failure. Looking at race and ignoring class is

[6] I picked random numbers to illustrate the situation; workers may deserve much more than $25/hour.

misleading; it results in a call for an anti-racist position. To radically criticize this situation, class, not race, should be the point of departure.

Public schools in America have been colonized by corporate agendas aimed at stripping public education of its democratic mission. Underwritten by corporate agents, the standardization movement, charter schools, and privatization have been turning schools away from democratic education and toward for-profit sites (Avcı, 2019; Giroux, 2002; Hill, 2009; Leistyna, 2007; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007; McNeil, 2009). Having failed to critically examine neoliberal capitalism, the CRT literature offers almost nothing to address this corporate colonization of education. Furthermore, it does not propose any education system that counters neoliberal colonization and is oriented toward freedom, equality, and justice. Therefore, CRT is unable to substantiate its arguments about—and potential solutions for—the achievement gap. Instead, studies inspired by CRT keep saying the same thing over and over, like a broken record: "White students have more opportunity than Blacks." This claim assumes that in America today, all White kids receive a quality education. This falsifiable claim[7] alienates poor White students, promotes ethnic pride (chauvinism) among students of color, provokes students of color against White students, and eradicates material ground of a genuine multicultural and democratic education.

Racism is a reality in the U.S. and it impacts many aspects of life, both public and private. It should be recognized that any attempt (theoretical, political, activist, etc.) to disrupt racism is important. CRT's anti-racist contribution is also important. However, CRT as a whole has failed to criticize the political economy of capitalism that produces and reproduces inequality and exploitation. The consequent lack of a political-ideological transformative vision among CRT scholars often results—intentionally or not—in conservative and backward narratives and perception in and out of schools.

For example, CRT promotes ideas like "White teachers cannot/should not teach Black students," and vice versa. If CRT were to fight for an education system where our children receive a democratic education to become loving, lovable, and caring individuals and critically engaged citizens, it would promote teachers who

[7] In my 16 years of classroom teaching, I have witnessed that fact on a daily basis.

have intellectual quality, democratic values, and caring personalities regardless of their skin color. What is needed is the creation of democratic schools where students and teachers from diverse backgrounds can find "unity in diversity," as Freire (2000) proposed. In poor schools, White and Black working class students can learn from and with one another to develop critical literacy to become engaged and critical citizens. On the other hand, the CRT proposal would only bring about further segregation and ghettoization that is in interest of the ruling class.

The way in which CRT defines race and racism disables its capacity to challenge the system and promote a better one. Because it ignores the constitutive power of class and class-based society, CRT fails to understand diverse nature of human conflict, as well as the dynamics and contradictions of class-based society. This shapes Black people's perception, resulting in their tendency to explain every problem, at both social and individual levels, through race and racism. This unfortunately wears out the effectiveness of anti-racist discourse in general and alienates White working class people, who otherwise could be an ally to form a strong united front against fascism and racism.

It is statistically correct that students of color get involved in disciplinary problems in school in America. Popular narratives inspired by CRT explain this issue by racism. The CRT argument goes as follows: if 10 percent of White students receive disciplinary referral, Black students' referral rate should also be around 10 percent. While race may play a role in this, it is known for sure that family background (poverty, homelessness, domestic violence, single parenthood) has a significant impact on how students behave in school. It is no coincidence that the majority of students who receive disciplinary referral also qualify for free/reduced-cost meals. The root cause of disciplinary issues is thus poverty, and our focus should be the social, political, and economic structures that produce inequality and poverty. But instead of demanding a quality education for all students in poor neighborhoods, CRT keeps proposing the same Black-White binary approach that changes nothing.

Another CRT-related ambiguity often takes places in math education. According to this viewpoint, Black students struggle with learning mathematics

because current math education is made for Whites. For example, in Washington state, the Seattle school district[8] adopted a curricular policy that explains the achievement gap in math as a product of racism: math education is claimed to be racist. These kinds of CRT-infused educational policies and implementations confuse public opinion and divert attention from the root causes of inequality and injustice. As I have mentioned earlier, overemphasizing race and racism while ignoring the capitalist socioeconomic structure results in class division and oppression, leading to ambiguous and baseless political viewpoints and actions. Claiming that math education in America is racist has no substance. As a math teacher, I can confidently assert that the issue in math education is not racism.

Math, more than any other subject, is constructed cumulatively, from kindergarten to high school: from basic addition and subtraction, to order of operations, to calculus. At each grade, a certain portion of mathematics needs to be learned with understanding. Regardless of color or ethnicity, students who live in affluent areas have many more chances to learn math thoroughly at each grade level without any gap between levels. Therefore, the way math education—and, of course, the entire education system—is designed reveals class-based discrimination: the failure of students of color in poor schools can be understood from a class-based, not race-based, analysis. Class-based capitalist society and its education system in America and elsewhere in the world uses math as a *gatekeeper*. Students from well-off families have an excellent chance to learn math as a structured sequence, and are therefore well positioned to be successful at standardized exams. Students from poor families, on the other hand, will probably miss something along the way, and consequently do poorly on exams. For example, if a student fails to learn order of operations in sixth-grade math class, it will be very difficult to make it up later. The capitalist ruling class thus uses math as a control device to discourage working class students and encourage well-off ones to reproduce the class system. CRT wastes an opportunity to expose the inequity and injustice embedded in math education.

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[8] The article in the following link looks at the issue from a right-wing perspective. CRT-inspired policies and implementations like these provide the Right with a strong hand to argue against an approach that could be otherwise very effective. https://www.hoover.org/research/seattle-schools-propose-teach-math-education-racist-will-california-be-far-behindseattle

CRT AND BLM

The BLM movement became much more popular after George Floyd's murder. As we review the list of black individuals killed by police in America, we see that poverty is the common denominator of all these incidents: none of these killings took place in neighbors where middle and upper middle class Black people reside with their White fellows from the same class background. However, instead of class-based discrimination and poverty, the notion of White supremacy became a key point in any conversation about BLM and anti-racism.[9] Where can White supremacy theory lead us? The notion of White supremacy seems to not have led to any democratic change so far. Assuming all White people benefit from racism, expecting them to say, "Yes, I am racist" and go through a process of self-healing has no sociological, psychological, or ontological basis. However, it is an observable fact that the publicity given to BLM has made Black people more likely to indiscriminately hate Whites. Neither BLM nor White supremacy seems likely to deliver a more just and democratic society. However, BLM has the potential, as Darder and Fletcher (2020) suggest, for becoming part of a larger struggle toward a more just and equal world:

> More than ever, strategic unity is essential to ameliorate the torment of working people in this country and abroad. Such unity can open the way to rebuilding the labor movement and putting forward a challenge in the electoral arena, where pivotal battles are being fought over whether this country continues on its path toward neofascism, or embraces a transformative political direction of social and economic justice. (Darder & Fletcher, 2020)

Such a unity is, I argue, possible only if CRT-inspired theories and practices adopt an anti-racist perspective such that working class people, regardless of their ethnicity, can come together and fight for a better world for all.

[9] BLM official website: https://Blacklivesmatter.com/about/

CONCLUSION

CRT is important because it generates awareness about race and racialization. However, in terms of what it brings to and takes away from movements against neoliberal capitalism, CRT is seen to be a petit bourgeois ideology. Using race as the prime unit of analysis, CRT ignores class: it does not identify capitalism as the root cause of inequality and oppression. Instead, CRT provokes White and Black working class people against one another, and then reduces racism to the intrapersonal, psychological problem of Whites who allegedly benefit from White supremacy. Regrettably, this standpoint offers no solution that would potentially diminish racism; instead, it enhances hegemony of neoliberalism. CRT seeks for some betterment *within the capitalist system*, and therefore it is far from challenging the sociopolitical and economic structures that result in exploitation, inequality, and injustice for the majority. In short, CRT is a petit bourgeois ideology, not a revolutionary one.

CRT needs a whole new language and an ideological-political perspective about racism that distinguishes, as I have indicated elsewhere,

> between problems of Black and brown people in the back streets of America and the problems of a Black Hollywood star who complains that no Black actors or actresses were nominated for an academy award. While the Hollywood star's race-related problem could be solved within the [capitalist] system, solutions to problems of working class Black people require radical and revolutionary changes. (Avcı, 2019, p. 49)

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(RCP) Rethinking Critical Pedagogy ISSN: 2717-8927

Volume-1, Issue-2, October 2020.

From the Village Institutes to Critical Pedagogy[10]

Rethinking the 'Democratic School' through Tonguç and Freire

Kemal İnal

Abstract

By pinpointing similarities between the Pedagogy of Village Institutes in Turkey as a practical education model in the beginning of 1940s and Critical Pedagogy as a theoretical approach today, this article examines how these two strong educational traditions can contribute to the role of the 'Democratic School' in solving today's educational problems. For this purpose, the views of İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, the founder of the Village Institutes, and Paulo Freire, the founder of Critical Pedagogy, were analysed comparatively. The article aims to show that today a democratic school model based heavily on Tonguç and Freire's views can be a solution for addressing various educational problems created by neoliberal capitalist education.

Keywords: *Village Institutes, Tonguç, Critical Pedagogy, Freire, Democratic School*

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[10] To cite this article: **İnal, K. (2020). From the Village Institutes to Critical Pedagogy: Rethinking the 'Democratic School' through Tonguç and Freire. *Rethinking Critical Pedagogy, 1*(2), 48-68.**

Introduction and Argument

The Village Institutes ("Köy Enstitüleri") in Turkey should be considered as an experience in learning in the long history of critical democratic educational practice. Founded in 1939 and then closed partly in 1946 and completely in 1954, they were much discussed until today, either glorified or disparaged but never ignored due to their educational as well as political importance and the meaning they carried. Even today, in public debates in Turkey's critical education circles, political and historic function of the Village Institutes flares up from time to time. It is quite possible to see a similar style of argument and discussion in critical pedagogy today within the framework of Freire's views. The Village Institutes, designed into developmental policies of Turkey and officially built on a school model that was put into practice in some rationally chosen rural areas of the country, relied on a secular state power. Although the origins of both education models differ in some ways, they have many similar directions in terms of following an awareness-raising effort with education for the oppressed, namely the poor, illiterate and landless villagers. In this article, based on a comparison of the views of İsmail Hakkı Tonguç as the founder of the Village Institutes and Paulo Freire as the leading figure of Critical Pedagogy, I try to point out some connections that exist between the Village Institutes as a school model in Turkey and Critical Pedagogy as a pedagogical approach and education movement all over the world. I then analyse these two educational models within the conception of "Democratic School". I argue that these two models of the past say many things in founding a democratic school that are useful for today's education problems caused by the neoliberal conception of pedagogy in a highly globalized world.

The Village Institutes in the Politics of Turkey

There are those who have long argued that the Village Institutes can be revived in modern, contemporary urban conditions, perhaps in a different form, namely "Urban Institutes".[11] While there are those who find such suggestions

[11] For this model, see Adil Türkoğlu, Köy Enstitülerinden Kent Enstitülerine. Bir Model Önerisi, Ankara: Anı Yayınları, 2011.

unnecessary, unwarranted and anachronistic in terms of history and context incompatibility, some scholars from Turkey claim that the Village Institutes can only be used again today philosophically rather than physically.[12] The debate on re-adapting these schools to the present conditions shows it's still inexhaustible importance to the Turkish Left. The Village Institutes were a development-oriented educational practice only for the agricultural community where the many villages of that time (around 40,000) were living in the very poor rural conditions of 1940s Turkey, but it was able to cross this spatial limit and become a universal education model for some countries. Turkish society today is very different from its past in the 1940s, when most of the population consisted of poor peasants living in villages, almost all of whom were illiterate. But after since the pro-American "Democratic Party" came to power in 1950, Turkey has undergone a massive shift towards industrialization and urbanization, its cities have grown, and its economic structure has been liberalized. A kind of view based on individualistic values was strengthened all over country, leading to the search for a new way of life in the big cities dominated by the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the policies, staff, and expenditures of education have already been directed not only to the villages but also to the educational services in the cities. Turkey has changed a lot in terms of its demographic, economy, and politics after those times. In addition to this, new education trends emerged in terms of newly founded private schools run by the bourgeoisie where strong individualistic values were supported. Many different models were tested and practised for the purpose of being a "small America". After Turkey took the decision to be part of the Western block of the two opposing camps shaped after the Second World War, all governmental apparatus also began to take shape according to this decision. The Village Institutes were already perceived as a left-wing base reminiscent of the Soviet system and were accused of raising radical students whose alleged duty is to incite the peasants to revolt against the bourgeoisie. Implementation of collective life and training methods in these schools were bothering pro-American liberals in Turkey, so the Village Institutes were stripped of

[12] For this approach, see Murat Kaymak, The Village Institutes as "Schools of Life and Work", *Educazione Aperta*, Number 5, 2019, pp. 145-158.

their original philosophy before they were transformed into ordinary, poor quality and traditional teacher training schools in 1954.

Defining the Village Institutes and Critical Pedagogy in terms of consciousness based on practice

Trained in the Village Institutes to be a primary school teacher, a student could easily produce a wooden or iron chessboard. He could also manufacture the chess set by using the facilities available at school and learn how to play this game well. The student who built a wall of a workshop in the school could read Sophocles, discuss it with his friends at school, write an essay as homework on the subject, and even stage this play. In other words, in the Village Institutes, practice and theory were not opposing dichotomous realities, but pedagogical milieus where dialectical contradictions were resolved. In these schools, there was no capitalist result that Frankfurt School theorist Herbert Marcuse criticized in his book "One Dimensional Man"[13]. This was, in fact, a model of Marx's "polytechnic education"[14] aimed at training people as "multi-faceted". As a matter of fact, İsmail Hakkı Tonguç,[15] who established and managed the Institutes for seven years, stated in his books many times that he considered physical and mental education together. Under the "productive work" practice, which is the underlying principle pedagogy of the Village Institutes, the basic aim was to produce while learning a subject matter as well as to change the material environment while producing. Unlike a context where almost everything (information, news, money, relations, etc.) is devoured rapidly in today's consumption-oriented school concept, teachers and students in the Village Institutes saw and evaluated production, first of all, as a philosophical category that could change the course of life rather than just an economic occupation. The foundation or

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[13]V. M. Heins. (2017) Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man. In: The Oxford Handbook of Classics in Contemporary Political Theory, ed. Jacob T. Levy. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Online Publication Date: November 2017; http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/. Book Publication: 2020.

[14] Robin Small, "The Concept of Polytechnical Education", *British Journal of Educational Studies,* Vol XXXII, No 1, February 1984, pp. 27-44.

[15]While studying in Germany in 1920s, Tonguç was impressed by the vocational training views of Kerschenteiner and Pestalozzi, and has written and translated many books on practical education. Some of his books in Turkish are: İsmal Hakkı Tonguç, *İş ve Meslek Eğitimi*, Ankara: TÖB-Der Yayınları, 1974; İ. H. Tonguç, *Mektuplarla Köy Enstitüsü Yılları*, *1936-1946*, İstanbul: Güldikeni Yayınları, 1999; İ. H. Tonguç, *İlköğretim Kavramı,* Piramit Yayınları, 2004; İ.H. Tonguç, *Köyde Eğitim*, Ankara: KEÇEV Yayınları, 2008; İ.H. Tonguç, *Canlandırılacak Köy*, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2019; İ. H. Tonguç, *Pestalozzi Çocuklar Köyü*, İstanbul: Cumhuriyet Kitapları, 2020.

main orientation of this philosophy was to raise consciousness of the person to transform the world.

İsmail Hakkı Tonguç as the architect of the Village Institutes was able to explain what the Village Institutes would do with one word: "revitalization" (“canlandırma” in Turkish). I find an affinity between this word and Paulo Freire's term "conscientização".16 Freire, in "The Pedagogy of the Oppressed", described this concept as a consciousness-based learning process for learners (adult illiterates) to grasp the various contradictions that surround them, that is, the problems created by their oppressors, and take action to change the conditions of reality that oppress people. Tonguç had, on the other hand, used the term “revitalization”[17] with the meaning that peasant-origin students (and the adults around the Institutes) try to be a dominant power in their hard material environmental conditions by transforming the difficult natural conditions like wasteland into an oasis, finding a source of potable water, improving animal breeding, etc. while being conscious of the “productive work” principle and learning a new profession. “Revitalization” was a sort of process based on a “technical socialization” in which the utilization of a potential was intertwined with the possession of modern jobs and professions. Of course, in order to explain this situation, I think it is appropriate to use Gramsci's category of "organic intellectual".[18] Tonguç and his pedagogical team saw themselves, first of all, as intellectuals who were an extension/organic component of the peasants. However, Tonguç and his working team in the Institutes thought that the peasants were also intellectuals in practical relations, namely and firstly in their relations with rural production. The foundation of Tonguç's praise to the villagers was not empty. The positive traits he attributed to the villagers were potential and values were to be revived in them. All it took was to gain awareness, that is, to acquire new, modern, and productive habits.

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[16]Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, New York: Continuum, 2005a.
[17]Tonguç, Canlandırılacak Köy, 2019
[18]See for a detailed evaluation of this concept in the Brasilian context: Timothy D. Ireland, *Antonio Gramsci and adult education : Reflections on the Brazilian experience.* Manchester: University, Centre for adult and higher education, 1987 (Translated by Kemal İnal into Turkish: Gramsci ve Halk Eğitimi. Brezilya Deneyimi Üzerine Düşünceler, Ankara: Töz Yayınevi, 2020.)

Only when modern technical habits are acquired, would this process open a new world through culture lessons that would provide an enlightened identity for the rural-origin students as well as for the villagers around. With this new world, the peasant, who would be a good producer, a good voter, and a conscious citizen through education, would gain a formation and equipment that could reproduce the forces that enliven his/her life. In this context, parallels can be drawn between the term revival and the concept of "bildung"[19] of German pedagogy. German pedagogues like Nohl use the concept of bildung in the sense of "developing orientation", in both formal education and later social life of people. Orientation is that a professional move forward equips the individual with a certain formation. In the process of bildung, the person dominates over the object / nature and combines natural features and material possibilities in his own personality. While developing new, modern and productive orientations in the peasant, the human (workforce), agriculture (land), consciousness (culture / personality), potential (talent / skill), solidarity (alliance) actually meant the re-creation of the peasant himself in the work. Revitalization means that the potentials such as doing business, resisting difficulties, understanding the language of nature, learning by seeing/doing, collaborating and cooperating among the peasants and villages are inert due to various reasons (e.g. religion, poor education, traditional beliefs, fatalism, primitive agricultural techniques, etc.). These potentials should be awakened and activated. Doing so, the peasants will be revived and transformed into "productive producer", "good voter", "conscious citizen" as stated by Türkoğlu.[20] So, revitalization means having a job and a profession, that is, learning and using modern techniques while producing and solving various problems and raising awareness. In short, it means defeating the contradictions, reactionary forces and difficult natural conditions that surround him/her while being a conscious citizen at the national level and developing through education. That is to say, the content and purpose of both "revitalization" (cultural development) and "conscientização" (critical awareness) are the same: to learn critically. The theory of learning in the Village Institutes, where theory and practice were working together and intertwining, was mainly based on practice through formal education. One of them, namely theory or practice, did not

[19]See for a detailed and applied conception of bildung in intercultural pedagogy: Arnd-Michael Nohl, *Kültürlerarası Pedagoji*, çev. Nazlı Somel, İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2014.
[20] Pakize Türkoğlu, *Tonguç ve Enstitüleri*, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009.

stand out. Practice created the model, but there was also an underlying thought. In this regard, too many models have been invented and put into practice in the Village Institutes, where some of these were related to animal care, the treatment of diseases, the cultivation of the land, but mostly aimed at developing new methods of education by transforming the consciousness of the peasant-origin students. Like this, the learning model Freire applied to landless peasants/workers in Brazil in the early 1960s was also based on an awareness-raising practice through non-formal education of adults.

Critical Learning

Both models were based on "critical learning". The main criticism at the Village Institutes was or targeted at traditional theoretical, abstract, and rote education inherited from the Ottoman culture. In Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, the "banking education model" that objectifies and petrifies the peasant / worker, creates the perception that the system is immutable, and is loaded with theory weighted, was founded on a monolithic, hierarchical approach based on the absolute knowledge and authority of the teacher. Freire's model, which he called "problem-posing education," focuses on the consciousness of the learning adult through various techniques such as productive words, circles of culture, etc. Freire's pedagogy for the oppressed was dialogic; that is, learning was grounded on a mutually productive, two-way relationship between learner and teacher for whom this relationship was democratic. The educator could be a master, authority, or director, but not an oppressor. Learning was and should be mutual. In fact, in my opinion, this model was also practiced successfully in the Village Institutes. While the teacher was teaching her/his student how to build a wall, the student was able to teach his/her teacher something new by incorporating the knowledge, experience, and skills he gained during his/her education.

In Tonguç's approach, the traditional teacher-student relationship model disappeared in favour of the emergence of an inter-subjective relationship among them. Administrators, teachers, and students were side by side, hand in hand, intertwined. The reason why students, teachers, writers and scientists who graduated from the Village Institutes were self-confident, skilled and talented, and played

important roles in the democratization of Turkey, was that the education they received was socially dialogic based on cooperation with the other, namely poor people. The dialogic model was the prior pedagogy to ensure that the silent student is active as a subject in education. That is why the intellectuals who graduated from the Village Institutes might have been put into a leftist conception of democracy based on dialogic interaction, solidarity and cooperation into practice, as exemplified in both in their individual works and collective efforts and educational or social organizations they founded in the search of enlightenment of the poor and illiterate. Both Tonguç and Freire desired, first, to create a "democratic human"; even though their techniques were different, their philosophical point of views and attained goals were very similar.

Actually, Tonguç and Freire were public educators. They had aimed at realizing a mass education in the person of poor people, not individual education. Both thought that the policies that would train the masses of the people would put the democratization of the country into practice. For both, those people were peasants. Most of the population of both countries in that period (1940s in Turkey and 1960s in Brazil) consisted of largely poor, illiterate, and landless peasants. Both people were exploited to the utmost and could not fully claim the crop, even if they got some, it was too little and inefficient Tonguç deliberately chose the term "Institute". The main reason for naming the Village Institutes instead of the Village (Teacher) School was the demand for examination and research on the material conditions (the condition of the land, water, animal, forest, diseases, cultural potential, social conditions in which people live, etc.), in addition to education.

In fact, Tonguç intended to found a kind of "Village University" in poor rural areas. With this model he targeted a school model that would conduct research, draw conclusions, put the results into practice and apply them in practical life. In his mind, the meaning of the Institutes was clear: A research institution in the sense of a Western university that will carry out research while teaching. Tonguç was making use of Dewey's model of "learning by doing"[21] with a model of "learning at work, by working and with the use of work".[22] Dewey's model was perhaps appropriate for the relatively prosperous conditions of the United States, an advanced capitalist industrial

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[21] J. R. Shook. (2000). Dewey's empirical theory of knowledge and reality. Vanderbilt University Press

[22] In Turkish: "iş üzerinde, iş yaparak, iş ile öğrenme"

country, but for Tonguç, "learning by doing" was highly abstract, symbolic, and experimental in terms of the poor conditions of Turkey. Due to Turkey's lack of resources, rather than founding a laboratory school in experiment in Dewey's sense, it was necessary to found a school based on direct application of teaching. As a matter of fact, when the first group of students arrived in the rural area where the Village Institutes were founded, where they saw that there was not even a building for school, they inevitably had to dive directly into work-based learning while constructing their school buildings and workshops. Therefore, the Village Institutes were an inevitable requirement of education due to the conditions at that time of Turkey. Necessity was neither accident nor possibility. It was an unmistakable result of harsh reality.

Polish educator Ignacy Szaniawski[23] claimed that "the postulate of bringing the school closer to life has plural meanings." Dewey also considered the school to be a pragmatic tool between life and democracy, while Tonguç formulated it as *life* itself. Because the work as an educational/pedagogical tool in the Village Institutes was oriented directly to solving any problem of the villager (for example, the pest commonly seen in agriculture, the sickness of animals, the soil becoming arid, etc.). At those times in Turkey, it was not possible to develop, modernize and establish a democratic order without solving the problems of the villagers who made up 80% of the country. In order for the peasants not to become a pool of votes for the reactionaries, their problems had to be solved with them together in their own life conditions by mobilizing their potential. This is how the village Institutes became *life* itself so that life, in a sense, would become education. This was both easy and difficult. Easy because it was something more or less known; difficult because new techniques and knowledge had to be learned and applied.

The Function of Criticism

For both Tonguç and Freire, "criticism" was primarily a way of thinking, learning method and means of expression. It was also a ground and milieu for democratic participation. *Culture Circles* in Freire's method and *Days of Criticism* in Tonguç's schools served to the same logic: solving problems through dialogue (Freire

[23]Ignacy Szaniawski , Okulun Toplumsal İşlevi, Çev. T. Yılmaz, Ankara: Onur Yay., 1980.

called this *conversation*). The dialogue was not based on monologue, but on mutual reflection, conversation, and discussion of equal parties. However, the process of these meetings was open to dialogue, criticism, self-criticism, and self-control. Criticism is, rather than the personalized subjects of ordinary or bilateral relations among people, a mechanism with which information obtained through observations and experiments during working times is used to find the most accurate learning system. Because it was constructive, not destructive, it also developed a democratic personality. Criticism was not a kind of method for control, surveillance, or impeachment, but a tool for doing things together more efficiently. Criticism, despite everything, did not prevent people working face to face, side by side, hand in hand. Tonguç's students could criticize all the authorities like teachers, principals, district governors, if necessary. Criticism was a kind of existence and a form of self-realization for any student to be well-schooled. Freire's students also stated that after they became conscious, their perspective on life changed and they became more confident in themselves. This, of course, demonstrated the power of (reading and writing) words as well as the ability to internalize those words claimed by Freire.

Emancipation and Democracy

The main goal of both the Village Institutes and Critical Pedagogy was to liberate the young students and adults, as learners who were taught to read and write, from their oppressors'. For both educational models, emancipation was not an abstract, symbolic and idealist transformation that started in the mind and ended in thought, but rather a pedagogical-political consciousness based on strenuous efforts to change material conditions. Emancipation meant a process in which dichotomous contradictions between theory and practice, for the Village Institutes, and between the oppressor and the oppressed for Critical Pedagogy, were resolved by putting dialectical thought and practice into work. That is why both Tonguç's and Freire's works were primarily and intensely directed at those who were oppressed. The main target was the liberation of the oppressed as represented by village children and peasants and landless workers. The emancipatory force would be democratic management through education. Therefore, in both practices, democracy and democratic education were not seen as a lesson, but as both a method and a result, kind of a new lifestyle created by the applied programs and methods. The democratization process was achieved not on paper, but in practice by sharing work,

authority, and responsibilities, doing work and education together, and making joint decisions. The resulting product was the "democratic community". The shaping of this community was synonymous with the materialization of a way of life. The organization of the Institute as a community revealed the collective power that would make it the true owner of the institution: The Institute belonged to nobody but everybody. The naturalness, simplicity, and sincerity that accompanied discipline prevented the group from splitting into individualistic tendencies, that is, into atoms. "Clusters" (Küme) in Tonguç, "cultural circles" in Freire, as democratic educational communities, prevented the individual from feeling lonely and atomized/alienated.

Polytechnic Education

While critical pedagogy considers learning as a result of education and training, it builds its basic philosophy on the goal of multi-directional development of individuals. The Village Institutes also focused on raising peasant origin students in a polytechnic way by employing the process of common mind, collective labour, and co-creation based on work. Polytechnic was, in fact, a solution to the alienating forces of capitalism's processes of division of labour, specialization, and de-qualification, as Marcuse explained in his "One-Dimensional Man." In capitalism, while work was reduced to a technical process that was handled in isolation from life, in the Village Institutes, the work of life was turned into the subject, tool and milieu of education.

Participation and Groups

Both the Village Institutes and the Critical Pedagogy movement allow the student to actually participate and become a subject in every process and in each condition, from administration to education, in order to learn democratic knowledge, values and experience in person, work or education, or a combination of these. In the Village Institutes, both mental potential and physical skills of each student benefited from the provision of with opportunities to participate in administration of the education works. Participation here was not abstract, symbolic, and experimental, but

de facto, problem solving, and democratic. In both Institutes and critical pedagogical practices, students did their work jointly in “groups”, not in an isolated way. The administrative organization of each Village Institute was established on groups consisting of around 50 students. The function of the groups was to solve problems inside the group, without sending it to the upper Institute administration. Groups were free and autonomous in their own right and possessed, to some extent, a kind of self-government. The group leaders were like intermediaries that played a role in coordination between the Institute administration and the students. Collectivism was meant to create solidarity, cooperation, and possible solution. This, too, strengthens group belonging, collective identity and common spirit. In the Village Institutes, from the very first days, students were on duty in each place of the school, in order to realize the value of everything that belonged to the Institute, from workshop to production areas, from dormitory to agricultural lands. Each unit in the different areas of education, agriculture, sports, music, etc. had a responsible head. But the administration of the school would take place in the form of horizontal organization, not vertical. Students could elect the head of the Institute and supervise the affairs and experience a kind of direct democracy in the school because the Village Institutes were planned to be a democratic place.

Creation of a new culture

It can be said that Tonguç put the synthesis in the foreground while forming the relationships between education and culture. Culture had two dimensions in his mind: 1) creating a "new culture" in the Village Institutes; 2) while creating this new culture, to ensure that students find the good, beautiful and useful aspects of the existing traditional culture when they go to their villages on holidays and bring it to the Institutes, and with this to realize a synthesis of the new and the old. Therefore, the Institutes aimed at creating cultural wealth by combining folk culture and modern technique in a work-based pedagogical environment. Tonguç, naturally, did not try to combine local/folk culture with universal values in a mechanical way, that is, not by taking one and adding one to the other, but articulating it dialectically. Additionally, in these institutions he treated folk culture and universal values as resolvable dialectical contradictions, not as antagonisms. The facilitating factor in this synthesis

would be scientific knowledge. Health-related folk knowledge from traditional therapeutic thoughts to some techniques, from epics to arts and traditional works (carpets, rugs, fairy tales, language and dialects, etc.) were all turned into both the subject matter of education and the elements to be developed by passing through a scientific filter. In the words of Türkoğlu: "By developing and enriching the healthy elements of folk culture in the light of education, it aimed to change the cultural level of people by influencing them with their own developed values."[24]

In Freire's learning theory, in the "culture circles"[25]which were formed in the literacy processes of landless workers/peasants, almost every cultural product that surrounds the workers/peasants as material and moral values from the land to the speaking style, was accepted as the subject matter of education, that is, to learning the topics worth reading and writing. Both Tonguç and Freire were determined not to include rote learning in the teaching process and tried putting education into practical knowledge and application of real life. For example, even an abstract, symbolic lesson such as mathematics in the Village Institutes could be used in the daily life of the Institute, while solving some problems of working life such as determining the size of a land. While boiling lime or whitewashing or pouring plaster, knowledge of chemistry and biology could be transferred into practice. While all this information was being learned, cross-relations could be established between the lessons, and the information obtained in one lesson could be used easily into other.

Learning from learners

Freire, who carefully observed every word and action of the oppressed, gave importance to students and learned many lessons from them. His critical pedagogy was founded on the premise that personality, experience, identity, history, and culture of the oppressed as their potential are valuable to be learned. Tonguç acted in the same way. Tonguç, who had village roots and travelled and visited ten thousand of villages in Anatolia throughout his life, thought that rural adolescents had

[24]Türkoğlu, ibid, p.265.
[25] Paulo Freire, Literacy: Reading the Word and the World, Westport: Bergin and Garvey, 1987.

experienced, durable, and free personalities. These teenagers took on authority and responsibility by participating in family production while working at an early age and developing more independent personality but having the disciplined behavioural habits. Therefore, Tonguç thought that peasant children could manage themselves better with these features if they got an opportunity to suitable education. For him: "The basic rule was that the students should follow the discipline with their own consciousness. The individual should be able to dominate his own actions based on his own free will."[26] Both educators discovered the power of the people and succeeded in revealing them through education.

Concluding Remarks: Rethinking Democratic School

As a result, although Critical Pedagogy, primarily as pedagogical design and practice for the oppressed, was formulated in different times, places and conditions, it is increasingly flowing in a similar channel with the pedagogical model of the Village Institutes of Tonguç in terms of sharing many common assumptions. Freire's basic assumption argues, namely, that there will be no neutral education, that education will either integrate with the logic of the system that serves the interests of the oppressors, or it will become a tool and a practice of freedom in which they discover how to participate in the transformation of their world by looking at the reality in which they are critical and creative. He argued that the critical pedagogue's preference was for the latter.[27] Like Freire, Tonguç hoped that education would raise the awareness of the individual towards liberation. Although Tonguç highlighted the work while Freire stressed productive words, both agreed that intellectual transformation must be through practice. In both models, the method relied heavily on the observation and transformation of practice. Freire has always put forward the concept of "being" against the petrified understanding of reality of crude positivist epistemology and ontology.[28] Being meant that knowledge, teaching, and their results should be open to improvement rather than finished, precise and absolute thing.

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[26]Türkoğlu, ibid, p. 395.
[27]Paulo Freire. Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare teach. Translated by Donaldo Macedo, Dale Koike, and Alexandre Oliveira, Boulder, CO: Vestview Press, 2005b.
[28] Freire, ibid, 2005a.

Education models in today's dominant school system, however much they talk about creativity, activity, innovation and project-based works, impose some closed-ended, finished and static educational issues on schools, rather than being an open-ended, unfinished and dynamic process. For example, centralized control, standardized content, reductionist exams, one-dimensional assessment-evaluation systems, authoritarian teaching methods, teaching styles that do not consider student differences are all various dimensions of imposition on poor students. With the concept of "being" in fact, Freire argued that democratic education for the oppressed in schools and various educational settings should have two basic principles. Like Freire, these two features, also emphasized by Apple and Beane[29] are necessary for the school to be a "democratic place": 1) democratic structure and processes; 2) curriculum providing students with democratic experiences. Consequently, for the school to be a "democratic place", it must be fair, egalitarian, scientific, secular and solidaristic. This should lead to the implementation of three elements in students: 1) critical thinking; 2) social awareness; 3) political empowerment. These three main goals stipulate that democracy should be a "way of life" rather than just a standard, process, and goal at school. As a matter of fact, for both Tonguç and Freire, education at school was not a practice for which democracy would be experienced as an experimental project, but rather one which would be internalized, built, and lived. Therefore, for both Tonguç and Freire (increasingly in critical pedagogy), democracy is not the utopia of tomorrow, but the practice that must take place today. But for this to happen, according to Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux, schools should be areas of "critical learning" and "social empowerment". [30] Consciousness and awareness must be developed in order to free students from various pressures. To achieve this goal, critical pedagogues should look at the political activities of enlightened individuals as their true interests.[31] Through dialogue, they try to change the roles of students and teachers and develop emancipatory forms of the curriculum.

[29]Michael W. Apple and James A. Beane. (eds). Democratic Schools. Lessons in Powerful Education. Second edition, 2007.Portsmouth, HN: Heinemann.
[30]Stanley Aronowitz and Henry A. Giroux. Education Under Siege: The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate over Schooling, 1st Edition, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986.
[31]David Blackledge and Barry Hunt, Sociological Interpretations of Education, London: Routledge, 1985.

Today, there are many structural barriers that prevent democratic schools from being founded. These obstacles also existed before, but now their number, type and influence have increased even more. Tonguç's Village Institutes and Freire's pedagogical practices for/of the oppressed developed various methods to overcome these obstacles. Today, the views of these two great, original, and effective educators, which are the same on many points, are represented most effectively in the different approaches of Critical Pedagogy. Critical Pedagogy is an educational model devoted to the liberation of poor segments of population who are oppressed, excluded, ignored, suppressed, marginalized, seen as out of date, enslaved, etc. Critical pedagogy, in Kincheloe's point of view[32], deals with the margins of society, the experiences and needs of individuals faced with oppression and marginalization. In this respect, critical teachers deal with individuals who have been excluded from their voices, texts, and perspectives. The main goal of this quest is to raise "critical citizens". Critical pedagogy focuses on developing students' critical capacities to think, criticize, and act in transforming their conditions. Its orientation is "public school" versus "individualist teaching".

However, some types of schools that we experience today as “democratic schools”[33] are schools that include public orientation, interests, and experiences, but their effects in educational circles are extremely little or insignificant. These schools have a powerful and significant democratic public space where the strongest scientific and democratic arguments within the framework of dialogic relations play important roles and give rise to the educational production in its organization. However, today, in a conjuncture in which knowledge is merely reduced to standardized central exams, educational materials like the curricula come as a package program from outside into school, the teacher is pushed to symbolic and ineffective positions such as "moderator", “mentor”, and "guide" rather than "instructor master"; democratic school should be taken into consideration. In addition, today’s education is directed at increasing technical competence rather than democratic ideals, inequality and injustice in access to education are still being experienced, parents are being blocked from participating in determination and implementation of education budgets and expenditures to the detriment of free education, conservative attacks weaken science

[32]Joe L. Kincheloe. Critical Pedagogy Primer. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.
[33]For these schools, see Apple and Beane, ibid.

and secularism in education, and schools became a "technology-intensive". Technical knowledge dominates the school when it is held responsible for preparing the students for various reasons like merely gaining a profession or acquiring skills only for the market. For example, knowledge of fields such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, and anthropology are seen as unnecessary and useless. While individualistic values are getting stronger in schools where companies, conservative forces, and a number of organizations under the name of so-called civil activities are increasingly involved in education, public issues can only be discussed in symbolic, artificial and temporary forms.

While classical Marxist theories heavily emphasized the reproduction of the educational system in powerful ways, they always forgot one thing. With the concept of "resistance", Critical pedagogy formulated what they had forgotten.[34] Yet its democratic potential cannot be understood if schools are taken just like that. As Apple also points out,[35]schools are not merely the institutions of reproduction, nor are they the organizations which inexorably produce explicit or secret knowledge that transform students into passive entities willing to keep up with and fabricate an unequal society. In other words, school is a space where many ideological and academic of negotiation and bargaining as education requirements are put into practice by the education subjects within the education and by some organizations and institutions outside of the school. Democratic school is and should be a place where the voices of oppressed or subaltern groups can be heard, in the sense of having a right to equal representation. Democratic educators should develop some democratic practices for solving the problems of subordinate, oppressed and excluded students who come to school with many disadvantages, problems, inequality and injustice outside of school as well as methods how to solve their problems within these practices. Tonguç and Freire literally were pedagogical masters and educational leaders in this regard. While these two educators were demonstrating their conception of democratic education in educational milieus, they built the teaching process on democratic solidarity, cooperation and administration in order to prevent their

[34] Henry A. Giroux. Theory and Resistance in Education: Towards a Pedagogy for the Opposition, 2nd Edition, Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 2001.
[35]Michael W. Apple. Education and Power. London: Routledge, 2011.

students from acting with personal/individualistic motivations such as diploma, grade, degree, status, resource, and certificate, etc. In their edited book, Apple and Beane are right in questioning whether schools today can both demonstrate what democracy means, and expand this meaning by taking it further.[36] I think they can do it but, in fact, Tonguç and Freire have already done it and showed us how to achieve it. The views and practices of these two educators are today represented in various forms and different approaches in critical pedagogical theory and practice. We still have a lot to learn from these two educators who built the road from the Village Institutes to Critical Pedagogy, especially in building a democratic school model for our times.

[36]Apple and Beane, ibid.

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RETHINKING CRITICAL PEDAGOGY-ISSN: 2717-8927
VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2. OCTOBER 2020.

This article was published first in Turkish at "Mektepli Bülten" (June 2020, Issue 2, pp.3-6) entitled "Köy Enstitüleri'nden Eleştirel Pedagoji'ye. Tonguç ve Freire Üzerinden 'Demokratik Okulu' Yeniden Düşünmek" ("From the Village Institutes to Critical Pedagogy. Rethinking the 'Democratic School' through Tonguç and Freire"). **The article for RCP has been revised and expanded**.

(RCP) Rethinking Critical Pedagogy **ISSN: 2717-8927**

Volume-1, Issue-2, October 2020.

Resisting fascist mobilization: Some reflections on critical pedagogy, liberation theology and the need for revolutionary socialist change[37]

Peter McLaren

Abstract

This article examines the current fascist mobilization initiated by the Trump administration in relation to critical pedagogy, liberation theology and socialism. Drawing on Marxism, the article aims to develop political-theoretical suggestion to resist fascism.

Key words: *critical pedagogy, socialism, fascism, oppression, and liberation theology*

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[37] **To cite this article:**
McLaren, P. (2020). Resisting fascist mobilization: Some reflections on critical pedagogy, liberation theology and the need for revolutionary socialist change. *Rethinking Critical Pedagogy, 1*(2), 69-96.

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INTRODUCTION

Did you say socialism? Anti-Marxist and anti-socialist sentiment in the United States is nothing new but in recent years it has been helmed by talk show personalities such as Sean Hannity who now have crony capitalism's most famous consigliore in their digitalized pockets, and who are sinisterly adept at gingering up Cold War rhetoric in fulminating screeds to suit these post-truth times. Despite its honorable affinity with the ideas of Henri de Saint-Simon, Robert Owen, William Morris and Charles Fourier, its historical connection with British Chartism, and its intellectual association with English-born American revolutionary Thomas Paine, the topic of socialism remains a dirty word in mainstream popular parlance (some even see it as synonymous with terrorism), with the exception of youthful advocates of Bernie Sanders, green anarchists and eco-socialist warriors in the tradition of Joel Kovel, Michael Löwy John Bellamy Foster and bleary-eyed social justice activists and self-schooled revolutionaries emboldened and revivified whenever there is an upsurge of worker or student militancy against the indelible corporate totalitarianism that currently besets us. While there are growing constituencies not yet ready to capitulate to the forces of corporate neoliberalism—new social movements, youth organizations, and social media forums dedicated to advancing socialism—there unfortunately remains a lack of alternative models that are within reach of achieving hegemonic ascendancy anytime in the foreseeable future. Given the capacious nature of the term socialism and the manner in which consent is manufactured in our society by our corporate media apparatuses (Chomsky is perhaps the best illuminator of this process) large sectors of the public cannot be expected to be familiar with the conditions that impacted the life expectancy of textile mill workers in New England in 1912 Lawrence Massachusetts, or fully comprehend the consequences of, say, Larry Summers destroying the bulwark between commercial and investment banks, or how the endgame will play out for the victims of sub-prime loans. Long-festering worker anger among deckhands, engine workers, pursers, farmers, warehouse workers, mechanics, machinists, aerospace workers, dockworkers, miners, construction

workers, carpenters, public sector workers, ironworkers, automobile workers, and a host of other groups—who have not had the opportunity to avail themselves of Marxist critiques of contemporary capitalism—has been corralled by Trump (not unlike the tactics of Italy's Five Star Movement), and marshalled in the service of building his cult sponsored chaos. Trump was able to connect viscerally to minimum-wage-slave constituents and those devastated by the loss of farming and manufacturing jobs, many of whom live in neighborhoods afflicted with contaminated water and an opioid epidemic. Capitalism does not provide what the people want; it provides what people who can afford it want. Because Marx exposed the inherent instability of capitalism in ways that the capitalist class and its Oprichniks cannot afford to be absorbed by the wider public, Marx's ideas have been twisted from their original intention (by both the left and the right but my focus here is on the right) and the distorted appropriation of Marx's works has not ceased up to the present, this time carried on the shoulders of alt-Right and right wing media and their firebrand pundits who blame 'cultural Marxism' on the Frankfurt School theorists, feminists, critical multiculturalists and anyone associated with advancing 'political correctness'. In addition to alt-Right groups such as Turning Point, which is geared to gaslight Republican university students and cobble together cadres of reactionary millennial refashioned from the casualties of the culture wars, the tentacles of Opus Dei can be found slithering through Washington's corridors of power, augmenting the ideological garishness of the alt-Right anti-globalists and ethno-nationalists with ghastly sacerdotal intensity, colonizing the summits of power with aerosol anti-cultural Marxist sentiments in the service of the anti-Kingdom (didn't you know that white people are the most oppressed people in the country, especially white Christian defenders of the Second Amendment!).

The most eerie and sinister cabals of the alt-Right, pseudo intellectuals led by Steve Bannon and his conservative Catholic allies, stand ready to commandeer the fight against socialism, single-payer health care and Roe vs. Wade on behalf of the Empire of Darkness (Bannon has a base in the Catholic Church). Bannon, fiercely anti-globalist, fears the global vision of the Church held by Pope Francis (who is very much the Pope of South America and beyond Europe) and prefers to see the future of the Church firmly ensconced within the Western world of Catholic tradition that includes free market principles. How European, male-centered priapic monotheism

has served Bannon and his ilk is a story that one day needs to be told before the opening of the first of the Seven Seals, when Bannon mounts his white horse, adjusts his crown and affixes an arrow to his bow.

As seen from behind the cyclopean walls of Europe, the US was the promised land, and Europeans were designated by God to be the recipients of this land, by force if necessary, and the Doctrine of Discovery, and papal bull Dum Diversas issued by Pope Nicholas V in 1452,and Requerimiento of 1513 ensured that. It was the beginning of the fantasy of an Anglo-Celtic wonderland that persists up to the present. The alt-Right has tried to give an aura of respectability to the notion of European 'identity', claiming that it needs to be defended against political correctness, feminism, erasure by immigration, global trade, multinational institutions, and leftwing multiculturalism. Some strands within the alt-Right have co-opted some of the language of the left in order to disguise its deep-rooted fascism. Discerning readers who follow the efflux of the alt-Right's ideological imperatives recognize that many of its rhetorical devices include gaslighting, gish galloping, the fallacy of ad hominem, weaponizing the big lie, and convincing the public that their untutored opinions gorged on gossip count as much, if not more so, than well-reasoned arguments. In fact, the wildest conspiracy theories today circulating within the information ecosystem are claiming the status of fixed repositories of truth and defended as absolute facts.

Liberation theology rose to prominence in South America in the 1960s and 1970s as a way of responding to the persecution of Latin America's poor and as a means for examining systemic oppression, that is, oppression built into social structures previously understood as apolitical, or even liberal democratic. Poverty is seen as evil, as this comes out of the Gospel message. But it is precisely a Marxist analysis of class that gives to liberation theology the foundations for understanding what must be changed in order for poverty to be overcome. I always find it troublesome when liberation theology is criticized for its 'politicization' due to its incorporation of a Marxist critique of political economy while being praised for its singular commitment to the poor and to social justice. But it is its connection to a Marxist analysis of class that to a large extent prevents liberation theology from becoming lost in the quagmire of liberal moralism and the politics of pious charity—a

stance which to its credit seeks to assist the poor yet regrettably leaves the very structures responsible for such poverty untouched and in tact, such as those scaffolded by the connivance of private tyrannies we call corporations and financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. But the key point to recall is that 'structures of poverty' (i.e., capitalist forces and relations of production, extraction of surplus value as both the means and ends of capitalism) are also forms of social sin that encapsulate using their repetitive form and as such these forms need to be dismantled and replaced with more egalitarian structures. Marxism is fundamental in meeting this challenge but it has been so demonized by the corporate media since WWII that the Catholic Church is loathe to even whisper the word. And to be brutally honest, the Catholic Church's storied affinity for fascism in the early 20th century must not be ignored (Francoist Spain, Portugal under Salazar, Italy under Mussolini, Pavelić's Croatia, Slovakia, Bavaria, Austria, and so on) when attempting to gauge its antipathy toward Marxism. We can thank the Second Vatican Council in 1962 for helping to put an end to this odious trend when, in 1962, Pope John XXIII formally opened Vatican II, which was closed under Pope Paul VI in 1965. Vatican II marked the beginning of a dialogue with a contemporary world faced with major political, social, economic and technological changes. However, a number of fascist regimes loyal to the Church survived into the 1980s. Regrettably, fascist and authoritarian regimes are creeping back to the political sphere once again worldwide, defending the global neoliberal economic agenda in countries as culturally disparate as Russia, India, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Turkey, Brazil, the Philippines, Israel, and Egypt. Their leaders rarely display any reluctance in dispatching their adoring followers to stamp out freedom and human dignity everywhere they go.

Brazil's Bolsonaro has bragged that he intended to 'enter the Education Ministry with a flamethrower to remove Paulo Freire' (Jeantet, 2019). Freire was a staunch supporter of liberation theology. While the Catholic Church has never formally denounced liberation theology, John Paul II appointed conservative bishops in Latin America in order to lessen its hold on the people.

We can all agree on the multitude of dangers that new technologies pose to the survival of democracy. It is difficult not to be enraged by the fact that information about every citizen is being entered into databases created by Big Brother Government. That there exist RFID (radio frequency identification) chips in credit

cards, passports and enhanced drivers licenses is something to make the hair on our necks bristle. Google can share with others the credit ratings of people inflicted with fatal diseases. The NSA is listening to our phone calls, our text messages, and our cell phones serve as ID tracking devices and can deliver to the appropriate vendors information on what food we buy, what garbage we throw out, our purchases, our favorite websites and where we spend our time.

How concerned should we be about surveillance society? Very concerned. The information in our computers and cell phones is being monitored and entered into government and commercial databases and these databases serve as firewalls that you need to get past if you want a certain job, a car, a house, or if you want to purchase—anything! They also turn everyone into terrorists-in-waiting. Anyone can be targeted depending upon the flavor-of-the-month enemies of the state. So whereas both the left and the right worry about the availability of commercial devices that enable anyone to read the RFID chips in your credit card, and to make illegal transactions with your card without your credit card actually leaving your purse or pocket, the right and left have very distinguishable ideological concerns surrounding the surveillance society. The political right believes that environmental protection and sustainable development—as propagandized by the United Nations—is really a ruse manufactured by the shadow government to seize people's private property. They want as much land as possible given over for capitalist production, with as few regulatory checks and balances on pollution and worker rights as possible. They ardently believe that the surveillance society is really aimed at the persecution of Christians, libertarians, anti-globalists and anti-abortion advocates. Rarely do you see in their videos or literature citations by the leading scholars in this field on the left, such as Noam Chomsky who could actually help deepen their arguments against the surveillance society. These are evangelical Christians afraid that Big Brother is going to open the gates to hell, a one world totalitarian government linked to the United Nations that they argue promotes abortion and uplifts pantheism and pagan religions and non-Christian beliefs. At the same time they promote Anti-Semitic conspiracies about George Soros controlling the U.S. diplomatic corps in Ukraine. If Christians are not allowed to discriminate against LGBTQ communities, or if they are prevented from praying in public school classrooms, or if they cannot get creationism into the

curriculum as a counterpoint to the theory of evolution, they claim that this amounts to persecution. At the same time, these same Christians are engaged in a holy war against socialism, and fail to consider that early Christian communities were socialist. In fact, the great union organizer, Eugene Debs, maintained that 'socialism is merely Christianity in action'. Advocates of critical pedagogy are supremely wary of surveillance society and much of its critique of information technology overlaps with similar critiques offered by the right. But clearly, critical educators view it more as a means of imposing a theocratic government, a way to monitor and control anti-capitalist activists, socialists, cultural Marxists. As a critical educator, I am more worried about the surveillance society being purposed by fascists in the anti-globalist, pro-prosperity gospel Trump administration to persecute any journalist who doesn't slobber over Trump's charisma and fawn over his policies, to purge critical scholars from the universities, to attack environmental and immigration activists. But I'm also concerned about the surveillance of right-wing activists, and this is one topic around which the right and the left might come together. In March 2019, the main office of the legendary Highlander Center in New Market, Tennessee, one of 10 buildings on the Highlander Center's campus, was set on fire by an arsonist who left behind a white supremacist 'hashtag' symbol. The Center, which was founded by Myles Horton and focuses on desegregation, organized labor and economic injustice once hosted such civil rights icons as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks and Congressman John Lewis. Recently, at an event that received twitter support from Trump, thousands of armed gun rights activists stormed into Richmond Virginia to protest new gun control bills being introduced by Democratic lawmakers. These groups included far-right militants such as the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers and American Guard, some wearing a jacket patch reading 'RWDS' — shorthand for 'Right-Wing Death Squad'. The RWDS insignia has been associated with support for fascist Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, and other dictators from El Salvador, Brazil, Nicaragua and Guatemala who employed death squads that tortured and murdered thousands of leftists, including Catholic priests and nuns, during the Latin America 'dirty wars'. Having met the children of leftists who were 'disappeared' by right wing death squads in a number of Latin American countries, I can only feel saddened by the vileness of these gun protesters who likely were taught little of world history. Spending their time on computer platforms communicating with their fellow gun lovers who seek to blame frustrations associated with their personal lives on

immigrants, people of color, liberal progressives, and LGBTQ and feminist activists, is a recipe for history repeating itself, which as Marx famously opined, first as tragedy, then as farce.

The Trumpland Express

Karl Marx's The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte can help us better comprehend the besotted arrival of Donald Trump and his imperial presidency onto the creaking stage of world history, stepping from an escalator that had just descended from the atrium of Trump Tower on Fifth Avenue in New York. On the French republican calendar, the date—18 Brumaire CCXXV—marks the beginning of a coup d'`etat led by Napoleon Bonaparte and his allies in which they overthrew the governing Directory and established a Consulate, giving Napoleon the power to choose his own advisors. For many historians, this marked the end of the French Revolution. Four years later, Napoleon crowned himself emperor. There was another coup d'ètat in 1851 involving the nephew of Napoleon I. This is the focus of Marx's essay. Marx's groundbreaking work examines from an historical materialist perspective the rise to power of Charles Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, the third son of Louis Bonaparte, the brother of Napoleon I, and his staging of a December 2, 1851 coup. Louis-Napoléon's coup enabled him to remain in office and implement a series of reform programs. His justification for his seizure of dictatorial powers was his universal popularity throughout France. In November 1852 he was confirmed as emperor and remained so until 1870.

Lee (2020) writes:

> In an open letter published in December 1851, Bonaparte announced the dissolution of the National Assembly, which he called a 'hotbed of conspiracies'. In January 1852 he put in place a new constitution, all the while accusing 'démagogues' of spreading 'fausses nouvelles' ('fake news'). In December 1852, Louis- Napoléon Bonaparte became Napoléon III. France's Second Empire commenced. Described as 'the first modern dictator' and 'one of the first modern leaders to rule by propaganda,' Bonaparte went from being

> France's first elected president to its last emperor. The Second Empire lasted until 1870, when the emperor, conscious of his declining popularity, declared war on Prussia – and lost.

Marx's work examines the contradictory relationships between the appearance of a struggle and its objective social content. Marx's method was designed to uncover the social forces and internal relations at work during the revolution of 1848 and to explain how and why the revolution of 1848 in France had led to Louis Bonaparte's coup d'état in 1851. The proletariats of Paris would learn significant lessons from the experiences of 1848–1851 to enable their successful workers' revolution of 1871. In his Preface to the Second Edition in 1869, Marx wrote that the intention of his essay was to 'demonstrate how the class struggle in France created circumstances and relationships that made it possible for a grotesque mediocrity to play a hero's part'.

Marx's (1851) classic work also began with the famous quotation: 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living'. Personally I prefer the following translation: 'People (die Menschen) make their own history, but they make it not however they want, not under self-selected circumstances, but out of the actual given and transmitted situation. The traditions of all the dead generations burden, like a nightmare, the minds of the living' (Marx, 1869). Marx's classic work raises the question of how a Bonapartist regime could arise from the contemporary historical-political circumstances of U.S. society and turn the White House into a pavilion of vengeful narcissism and political chaos. As in nineteenth-century France, there exists today in the United States, in the words of Miller and Fluss (2016), 'increasing desperation of poor and working people and a decimated left … subordinated … to capitalist parties …where members of vulnerable groups found themselves lured in by the siren song of right-wing strongmen'. Like Trump, Charles Louis- Napoléon Bonaparte 'pretended to be the savior of a country bathed in blood from workers' struggles'. Both Bonaparte and Trump 'exploited people's economic distress by planting seeds of nationalistic and racial anxieties in those who would listen to their

messages of restoring political honor and making their countries great again' (Miller& Fluss, 2016). Miller and Fluss (2016) also provide us with a comparison between Marx's descriptions of Louis Bonaparte and Donald Trump's media persona:

Bonaparte is said to be 'clumsily cunning, knavishly naive, doltishly sublime, a calculated superstition, a pathetic burlesque, a cleverly stupid anachronism, a world-historic piece of buffoonery and an indecipherable hieroglyphic for the understanding of the civilized— this symbol bore the unmistakable physiognomy of the class that represents barbarism within civilization'. Even Bonaparte's speeches anticipate Trump's rally rants: 'I am justified in repeating how great the French republic would be, were it allowed to pursue its true interests, to reform its institutions, instead of being constantly disturbed, on the one by the {socialist} demagogues and on the other by monarchist delusions … I promise you peace for the future'. While in London in 1848, Bonaparte joined a special constabulary to combat Chartism and other socialist tendencies. Similarly, Trump's line is very clear in singling out scapegoats instead of capitalism: 'Mexicans are taking our jobs. They're taking our money. They're killing us. Trump has had a long history of racial scapegoating, even referring to his Black workers as 'lazy'. These points send a very clear message to struggling white Americans: the problem is 'the Mexicans'; the problem is 'the Blacks'—in the same way that Bonaparte's message rang clear to the peasantry: The problem is the urban proletariat and its socialist leaders.

Miller and Fluss (2016) cite the observation by Marx's liberal counterpart, Alexis de Tocqueville, that 'Bonaparte's rise was in direct proportion to the fear of socialism'. They further note that 'Trump's rise, in comparison, is linked to white conservative fears of emerging social movements such as Black Lives Matter'. They point out that 'in order to quell such fear, Bonaparte and Trump promised to restore law and order'. There are other similarities between Bonaparte, who 'saw himself as the defender of petty bourgeois and rural elements against those who were hurting the French nation' and Trump, who believes that 'it is shadowy global elites and international finance that fleeces America of its wealth and prosperity'. Lee (2020) draws out some comparisons between the age of Trump and Flaubert's great novel,

Madame Bovary, which describes a world of insincerity, accusations of conspiracies and fake news, and lies masquerading as truth. In a 1852 letter, French author Gustave Flaubert wrote, 'When will we write the facts from the point of view of a cosmic joke, that is as God sees them from on high?' (Lee, 2020). Lee writes that, 'In many ways, we're living out an extreme version of the cosmic joke Flaubert envisioned' (2020).

Again, according to Lee (2020):

> A continual stream of tedious lies, meaningless clichés and empty grandstanding has disillusioned Americans just as much as it confounded Emma Bovary. Lieuvain's boring, bizarre address at the agricultural fair has its modern equivalents – think of Trump's meandering rally speeches, or his complaints about toilet flushing and cancer- causing windmills. Republican Congressman Devin Nunes is currently suing a fictitious cow for defamation, while the president's supporters applauded the statement that there was a war on 'Thanksgiving'. With the assassination of Soleimani, disregard for truth and reality– and examples of Madame Bovaryesque word salad – remains as blatant as ever. Mike Pence's reference to Soleimani's involvement in 9/11 is as detached from reality as Emma's vision of Roman ruins bordering a forest of tigers, camels, swans, sultans and English ladies.

Reality is unfinished, as are we as humans, which is why we have a constitutive need it seems to supplement reality with fiction. In the case of the US political scene, the fictional narratives have to be engaging, frenetically dramatic and entertaining enough to dazzle reality into obscurity, to conjure a new reality into being from imagined reality. The alchemist that transforms these fictional narratives to real events is, of course, the media industrial complex. These new events must have the capacity to distract us from other situations that have become 'all too real'. What is currently 'all too real' in the US is the impeachment of Donald Trump, a figure of unruly menace who could easily be considered the apogee of what Marx referred to in his writings on the Paris Commune as "the haughteous masters of the people." And so a powerful fiction must be used to suck a different reality out of the vortex of the all too real. The imminent threat of attack from Iran! Yes, that should do it! Consequently, as the

impeachment drama was playing out and expanding into new directions, the US sprung a surprise targeted assassination directed at Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani. Trump's murderous outlawry has prompted a retaliation from Iran and a state of grinding tension that could erupt into war at any moment. Trump has threatened to commit war crimes if Iran responds, destroying 52 Iranian cultural sites. Trump now has brought about an 'all too real war' situation that now surpasses the drama of 'all too real impeachment'. There is nothing that brings support to the leader of the US the way that war does. Nobody does war like the US, who are the world's masters of war. Of course, pundits are appearing all over the news cycle, mostly on Fox News, who approve of the assassination. But of course, nobody points out that these pundits are all tied to the arms industry, such as Jack Keane, retired Army general, Van Hipp, chair of the lobbying firm American Defense International, David Petraeus, the retired general who had commanded U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, and who works for Kohlberg Kravis Roberts and Co., the investment firm with holdings in several major defense contractors, John Negroponte, a former State Department official who is vice chair of the defense and aerospace lobbying firm McLarty Associates, and Jeh Johnson, former Homeland Security secretary in the Obama administration who currently serves on the board of directors of Lockheed Martin, one of the largest defense contractors in the world (Fang, 2020).

Kirell (2020) captures the lustful insanity of war profiteering in the United States when he describes comments made by the odious Stuart Varney of Fox News, which represent unbridled moral lunacy posing as far-sightedness:

> Over the span of his three-hour morning show, the Fox host repeatedly basked in the explosive glow of the precision drone strike's boost to Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, and Lockheed Martin stocks.
>
> 'Nice gains', he salivated over the defense contractors' stock prices like a sports commentator watching back an iconic play.
>
> 'Show 'em to me, show 'em to me, please', the Fox host giddily pleaded with his producers at another point—referring to the latest price increases—

> practically bouncing in his chair like a child asking for a lollipop.
>
> Ultimately, Varney could hardly contain his glee upon noting that, should you pick up stocks in ‘missiles and guns and stuff like that, you could do well today’.

Don’t Varney’s comments reflect the same perverted logic as that expressed by Kieran Christopher Williams, a 19 year-old facing capital murder charges in a fatal shooting at a concert inside a Texas club. As news cameras captured the spectacle of Williams being walked in handcuffs by law enforcement officials, Williams promoted his social media account, reciting his Instagram handle to reporters, and remarked: ‘That’s me, I’m an upcoming artist’ (Madani, 2020). Squeeze whatever notoriety you can out of every circumstance in which you find yourself. If there are drone strikes, purchase stocks in the arms industry. If you shoot someone, make sure they follow you on social media.

Does critical pedagogy have a place in a modern-day Bonapartist, Bovaryesque universe? Leveraging the tendency of students to question established doxa when confronted with new epistemic understandings, critical pedagogy attempts to outmaneuver ideologies requisitioned to restrain students from conceiving socialism as a credible alternative to capitalism. Professors who practice critical pedagogy highlight issues germane to the survival of the planet (ecopedagogy), to how we treat immigrants and refugees, to challenging structural racism and racialized micro aggressions, to exploring questions of gender and sexual identity, to supporting feminist politics, to combating white supremacy and hate speech on campus. For the most part they support internationalist, antimilitarist, and "egalitarian ideals. Critics of the Trump administration who are alarmed by its discernible shift towards Bonapartism have in some instances provoked a backlash by conservative faculty, administrators, and boards of directors against critical pedagogy, which they condemn for reducing all knowledge to questions of politics, power, and exploitation, thereby exacerbating the culture wars that have plagued the country for decades.

Since liberation theology combines Marxism, critical pedagogy and the teachings of Jesus, the question must be raised: Will this praxis of liberation be better positioned on university campuses to challenge the Bonapartism of the Trump

administration and its Christian evangelical minions? The message of liberation in the Bible brushes against the grain of the beliefs embraced by most Christian fundamentalist evangelicals who support President Trump. Debates have arisen around Venezuelan President Maduro's recent approval of the creation of the Evangelical Theological University of Venezuela. Is it a concession to the political right? Or is it a means of ensuring that the Venezuelan evangelical movement is not coopted by the forces that animate its American counterparts—anti-abortion, pro-capitalism, sexual abstinence, forces that emphasize the message of the prosperity gospel (God will help you achieve the Christian goal of becoming rich) and the desire to run the country as a theocracy, based on biblical rules and injunctions.

For those teachers and students who claim to be Christian, liberation theology presents a particularly difficult challenge for students on the right, since it puts social justice for immigrants, refugees and the poor squarely within the Christian wheelhouse. It has made it much more difficult for biblical literalists to maintain that the devil must have inveigled himself in the lives of those who support progressive ideals. For professors whose moral universe demands that they torque the subject matter of their classes towards topics that express a preferential option for the oppressed, all learning should embody a praxis of liberation. That does not mean that content for STEM classes such as biochemistry, aerospace engineering, chemistry or physics will be compromised; rather, it means that certain consideration will be taken in teaching these classes regarding how this subject matter can be taught in ways that highlight liberatory praxis, or ethical action in and on the world. After all, what is the point of reading the word and the world simultaneously, i.e., critically, if we are not prepared to take the necessary action to change the world in the interests of the most vulnerable?

In 1989, not long after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a number of Jesuits who were sympathetic to liberation theology were assassinated in El Salvador when the Atlacatl Battalion, an elite Salvadoran death squad trained and equipped by the United States, broke into the José Siméon Caňas Central American University on the outskirts of El Salvador's capital, and raided the residence where six Jesuit intellectuals who were critical of the ruling junta – Ignacio Ellacuría, Ignacio Martín-Baró, Segundo Montes, Amando López, Juan Ramón Moreno and Joaquín López y

López—were living. They were summarily executed along with their housekeeper and their housekeeper's daughter. During the civil war in El Salvador, priests and nuns who stood alongside the poor were frequently tortured and killed by right-wing death squads who perceived them as communist sympathizers. In 1977, priest Rutilio Grande was gunned down on his way to Mass in the rural town of El Paisnal and in 1980, four American churchwomen—Maura Clarke, Dorothy Kazel, Ita Ford and Jean Donovan—were raped and killed by Salvadoran government security forces. Those were the days when carrying a Bible in your rucksack could draw the attention of the authorities who might then consider you to be a subversive. And while Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was assassinated while celebrating Mass at a chapel at the Hospital de la Divina Providencia on March 24, 1980, the same day in which he delivered a sermon calling on Salvadorean soliders to stop carrying out the government's repression of the people, held some sympathy towards liberation theology, largely influenced by the teachings of his friend, Rutilio Grande, he was certainly in no way a revolutionary Marxist. The following year a U.S. School of the Americas-trained Salvadoran Army unit known as the Atlacatl Battalion unleashed the largest single massacre in recent Latin American history in the village of El Mozote, hacking to death and burning alive approximately 1,000 civilians – men, woman and children. In the name of fighting communist insurgents, the U.S. spent more than four billion dollars funding a twelve-year civil war that left seventy-five thousand Salvadorans dead.

Cindy Wooden (2019) writes:

> Pope Francis told the Jesuits how he once asked a Central American bishop how the sainthood process was progressing for the assassinated Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador. 'He replied: 'Absolutely out of the question. It would be like canonizing Marxism.' That was just the prelude. He went on in the same vein'.

Liberation theology captures the sentiment of Isaiah 61, verse one: 'He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners comes to liberate the oppressed'. Jesus identified the first two verses as a prophecy regarding himself, the Messiah, when he read from this chapter in Luke, 4:17-21:

[17) and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:18) 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, 19) to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor'. 20) Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21) He began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing'.]

Luke's chapter can be interpreted as an exhortation towards action. We as God's liberators will rebuild society. For those of us who understand capitalism as a form of robbery and slavery, this speaks to us with a special force. When, in Isaiah 61, verse 8, God announces, 'For I, the Lord, love justice, I hate robbery and iniquity' our attention is drawn to the gap between the rich and the poor on this earth, today, drawn to the dire conditions of the poor at this precipitous moment of our history. Even amidst the richness of the U.S., the connivance of private tyrannies we call corporations have left many cities here in financial peril, such as Camden New Jersey, the poorest city in the nation, with a 19 percent unemployment rate, and Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota, that has 57 percent unemployment rate. The Trump tax cuts will worsen this situation in the long run. But does anybody really care about inequality in the United States, except its most suffering victims?

The message of liberation in Luke's gospel brushes against the grain of the beliefs embraced by most Christian fundamentalist evangelicals who support President Trump. Yet at the same time it represents a continuing challenge. Perhaps Venezuela has found a way of limiting the most baleful aspects of Christian evangelicalism's right wing. But in the US this group has now been weaponized in the support of Donald Trump, and has turned Christianity into a monstrous cult whose 'swindle of fulfillment' has exposed to all who have eyes to see the blatant hypocrisy of its religious claims. Financial, legal and political advantages given to evangelical churches, and support for phony ideological battles such as America's War on Thanksgiving or America's War on Christmas, has become sufficient reason for

supporting a Bonapartist ideologue such as Trump. This is a group of Christians whose fire and brimstone animus towards political correctness, gays, immigrants, Muslims, refugees and feminists has stoked militia groups across the country to threaten civil war and to prepare for the 'boogaloo' (race war after the government collapses) if Trump is not elected to a second term. This is a group whose festering hatred of all things liberal harkens back to pre-Enlightenment days. Christianity of this stripe can no longer be taken seriously by people of faith who still place importance on rational thought. Debates over liberation theology may help clarify some of the issues surrounding the relationship between religious faith and politics but it is unlikely that liberation theology will survive the onslaught of the right wing media in a form potent enough to become a serious menace to the powers that fuel Trumpland. Today we still have a long way to go, as the struggle for a liberal progressivism (mocked as "political correctness") in our schools and society is being challenged in numerous quarters by a rising tide of angry, homophobic evangelicals led by Franklin Graham. In the meantime, Paula White, Trump's Pentecostal spiritual advisor, issues the following command before congregants at her City of Destiny church in Apopka, Florida: "In the name of Jesus, we command all satanic pregnancies to miscarry right now…We declare that anything that's been conceived in satanic wombs that it'll miscarry, it will not be able to carry forth any plan of destruction, any plan of harm" (Cole, 2020). I wonder what offspring from a satanic womb might have contributed to an exhibit marking the recent centennial of women's suffrage at the National Archives. Here administrators at the National Archives made a fateful decision to alter a display that included a 49-by-69-inch photograph of a 2017 Women's March. Signs carried by marchers critical of Trump were blurred beyond recognition, lest our great leader or his followers be offended. During the days of the Cold War, the US would frequently criticize official Soviet photographs in which prominent figures such as Leon Trotsky were carefully airbrushed out of existence, as if they had never been born. Is historical erasure the next step in the age of Trump? Airbrush away all criticism of Trump. It seems as if it's already here, since any news item that Fox News doesn't cover is apparently not worthy of being called history. Earlier in the year didn't Trump bemoan the fact that he was denied a Soviet-style military parade? We would first need to find Trump a balcony from which he could watch the spectacle with his confederacy of sycophants, parasites and sinecurists, a space redolent of the balcony above the Piazza Venezia.

For all the unshackled populist let's-rupture-the-system-and-drain-the-swamp bravado that emanates from the alt-Right, its dream is to recreate our social universe as a pulp novelist's cowboy rodeo version of Jean Luc Goddard's Alphaville in reverse. Alpha 60: No-one has ever lived in the past. No-one will ever live in the future. The present is the form of all life. Embrace the oblivion of our human condition and grab whatever you can. Don't question the Great Pretender. Go along with our "health alteration committee," our "executive action committee," our "preemptive neutralization committee" (official euphemisms for White House "kill lists") and we will keep you secure at the price of your freedom! The logical science that must rule us is embedded in the art of deal-making and money laundering exemplified by all the hucksters in Los Vegas and Atlantic City—and a sucker is born every minute! And praise the Lord that this is so!

A sucker is born every minute

If you want to win at this game you must accept without reservation that Noah's Ark held every species of animal including all species of dinosaurs (apparently they got along pretty well with humans in those days). And you need to take seriously the most outrageously ignorant claims, often the ravings of religious zealots. Let's see if I can make something up on the spot. The money to finance the purchase and completion of the Ark, primarily through junk bonds with a 14 percent interest rate, was raised by Trump thousands of years ago with some help from Robert Tilton. The souls of Trump and Tilton were borrowed from the Chamber of Guf, the Otzar or Treasury of Souls, located in the Seventh Heaven, then put back again after the deal was made and the Ark was completed. Intense flooding in 2304 BC caused the space in the Ark housing the two velociraptors—our favorite genus of dromaeosaurid the ropod dinosaur—to collapse and the velociraptors went on a feeding frenzy in the adjacent pens. Tilton was able to stop the carnage by incanting in tongues the language of the theropods. Hoo ba ba kanda!!! He da ma zonto! Praise Jesus. Hoo ba ba kanda! Oh la ba kanda! Centuries later, the souls of Trump and Tilton were retrieved from the Chamber of Guf and embodied in flesh and blood humans in the 20th century, ready to face whatever consequences awaited them as a

result of the choices they made. See how this all falls into place! So don't you dare let your children's teachers try to sell you on evolution or climate change or the whole house of cards will come crashing down and the Rapture will be delayed even longer. Praise Trump. Praise the Chosen One. Well, I'm not sure if this admittedly crude attempt at creating a conspiracy theory will catch fire, but in case it doesn't we have QAnon and a host of others to keep us engaged and entertained in our argybargy confrontations with other tribes.

The truth is that those draining the White House swamp and fighting the culture wars on the side of the free and the brave are doing so from the vantage point of the cesspool on Wall Street and the one percent who control most of the country's wealth. When a poor person votes Republican, in the hope of financial stability, it's tantamount to cleansing a wound created by capitalism's inherent instability with fecal matter. Your vote is unlikely to bring you a luxury home in a tony neighborhood. It's only going to get worse for you. But your whiteness will always be valued—count on that! Just let the market sort out your life chances and focus on the really important things—like the latest selection of firearms available for online purchase from Brownells, in case you are thinking of surprising your dad with an AR-15 for his birthday. Or purchasing for him some alt-Right fashion accessories.

Rule them, humiliate them, destroy them: but he seems like such a gentleman

Richard Spencer, the tweedy icon of white ethno-nationalists tries to disguise his racism and anti-Semitism by hiding behind fitted trousers, snappy vests, pocket squares and a 'high and tight' Waffen SS hair style, and appearing like he just emerged from a sporty blow-dry bar. But one only has to consider his craven, unscripted remarks after the infamous 2017 Charlottesville Unite the Right rally and the charade is exposed:

> We are coming back here like a hundred fucking times. I am so mad. I am so fucking mad at these people. They don't do this to fucking me. We are going to fucking ritualistically humiliate them. I am coming back here every fucking weekend if I have to. Like this is never over. I win! They fucking

lose! That's how the world fucking works.

> Little fucking kikes. They get ruled by people like me. Little fucking octoroons … I fucking … my ancestors fucking enslaved those little pieces of fucking shit. I rule the fucking world. Those pieces of fucking shit get ruled by people like me. They look up and see a face like mine looking down at them. That's how the fucking world works. We are going to destroy this fucking town. (cited in Coaston, 2019)

Here Spencer sounds more like a representative of the Einsatzgruppen of the Security Police and SD (Sicherheistsdienst, the SS intelligence service of Nazi Germany) than the snappily clad Duke University doctoral student dropout who specialized in European intellectual history. Yes Richard you were always who you were and will always be who you will be, but we can see behind the facade of who you are now. You are in a similar league of madness as Philip Van Cleave, president of the Virginia Citizens Defense League, who supports lethal 'puppy pistols' for use by kindergarten students, in a similar league as the militia members across the country who seek to bring about the second civil war, in a similar league as the sycophantic evangelical Christians such as Franklin Graham and Jerry Falwell Jr. and Paula White who support Trump as God's 'chosen one', in a similar league as those supporters of QAnon who are fighting the inglorious Satan-worshipping deep state pedophiles in the mainstream media, Hollywood and the political establishment. But continue to pose as a rarified soi-disant intellectual ready to do battle with the cultural Marxists who have infested the American academy with verminous treatises dealing with equality, liberation and justice.

You will be protected by Trump's wealthy minions. After all, what could go wrong when you support the man in the Oval Office? What could go wrong when you support God's 'chosen one', when your leader enjoys the status of a popular saint?

Trump awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to the king of hate radio, Rush Limbaugh, during his 2020 State of the Union address. This could not be more revealing of Trump, since it showcases to the world, whom he believes deserves the

highest civilian honor in the United States. For decades Limbaugh has treated black people as problems instead of people who face problems. He decried as "uppity" black people who become actional through moving beyond the need for white recognition (he accused Michelle Obama of "uppity-ism") and maintained that race riots were part of the Obama regime's plan for the nation. He referred to feminists as Nazis and liberals as traitors. He fomented hatred throughout the country, sometimes by defending slavery, or comparing gay marriage to bestiality, or accusing actor Michael J. Fox of faking Parkinson's disease, or calling toilet water a step up for some migrants, or asserting that the New Zealand mosque shooting was a false flag operation, or maintaining that school shooters vote Democrat, or attacking free school lunches for poor children, suggesting that hungry children should "dumpster dive," or that NASA's announcement of finding water on Mars was part of a climate change conspiracy. When Georgetown University law student Sandra Fluke advocated that employers cover the cost of their employees contraceptives, noting that her friend had an ovary removed because her insurance company wouldn't cover the cost of prescription birth control she needed to stop the growth of ovarian cysts, Limbaugh called Fluke a "slut" and responded: "So Miss Fluke and the rest of you feminazis, here's the deal…If we are going to pay for your contraceptives and thus pay for you to have sex, we want something. We want you to post the videos online so we can all watch" (Bassett and Bendery, 2012).

So you want to be a saint?

We might want to pause for a moment to consider the phenomena of popular sainthood. How difficult is it to become a popular saint these days? In the US it's available to politicians who, despite acting like reprehensible brutes, are able to give the evangelical churches access to power, which in the long term translates into more money and prestige than they could ever hope to acquire. And not that difficult, if we look south of the border for an example.

It turns out that even Mexican cartel members can be venerated as saints. Back in 2011, just minutes before I was about to give a speech in Morelia, Michoacán, La Familia Michoacana attacked the city, setting more than 40 passenger buses, trucks and cars on fire and using them to blockade the exits from the city. Moreno González,

also known as El Chayo ('Nazario' or 'The Rosary') and/or El Más Loco ('The Craziest One'), who headed the La Familia cartel, surrounded the state capital and a two-day shootout ensued that saw 11 people killed. My comrades and I took cover in a hotel amidst the machine gun fire. Moreno Gonz"alez, leader of La Familia and who later went on to head The Knights Templar cartel, was killed by Mexican authorities in 2014, after which time Michoacán natives reportedly began to venerate him as a saint. After all, The Knights Templar cartel, like the Trump administration, is run as a quasi-religious cult. Maria Guadalupe Lopez Esquivel, a leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, and also known by her alias 'La Catrina', was killed on January, 2020, in the municipality of Tepalcatepec, Michoacán, after a shootout with Mexico's army, National Guard and state police. Only 21 years of age, this 'Dame of Death' had thrilled her social media followers by showcasing photos of her in sexy poses while carrying automatic rifles and handguns. Time will tell if she will be venerated as a popular saint. If sainthood is open to a pathological narcissist, serial liar and misogynist adept at murdering foreign nationals, destroying democracy and the rule of law, and betraying our military allies—and also open to a pinup cartel assassin– then sainthood is clearly up for grabs today.

How does Trump expect to maintain his status as a saint? One answer would be: water pressure. Yes, water pressure. Water pressure in Trumpland is equivalent to holy water in the Catholic Church. In a grievously calculated move by a man who is forever beholden to Machiavellian thinking, Trump is reaching into—not the world of golden showers rumored in "opposition research"—but the everyday Home Depot world of shower faucets, dishwashers and bathroom appliances. Trump's base can relax in the thought that Trump will guarantee that their fecal matter will be swept away from their porcelain toilet bowls with the mightiest flushing motion possible, calibrating a seemingly unending swirl that leaves no excrement left behind, their hair and bodies will be soaked like a sponge after only a few minutes in the shower, their dishes will be sparkling clean after thunderous foamy pulses from their dishwasher. He will even throw in the old fashioned light bulbs to boot! But will he give up the secret of his hair gel? All of this takes us back to the 1950s suburban American Dream. Ultimately it's a question of cleanliness, of purity, of white picket fences, of segregation, of bleaching everything as white as possible. And from a sociolinguistic

perspective it means getting your message across with working-class directness by using a restrictive as opposed to an elaborative linguistic code (Bernstein, 1971)—and that message in Trump's filthy mouth is unmistakably irascible and racist, tantamount to flushing all those dirty immigrants from shithole countries and from America's skid row tent cities into the sewers of our broken democracy. No more namby pamby drivel from liberals that weakens our military, disrespects our firemen, our law enforcement, our coal miners and our president and which is dangerously attracting our youth to politically correct LGBTQ communities and the lecture halls of the cultural Marxists. No beaming aboard Starship Lolita with Hilary Clinton from the dingy basement of her pizza restaurant sex dungeon, even if Trump praised Captain Epstein's appreciation of beautiful women, many of whom were admittedly on the younger side. The future will be all boots on the ground, not the sound of the Matter-Antimatter Warp Drive and phasers burrowing through rock, but the snap of the pants during the goosestep, the crunching sound of the boot descending upon the face of a foreigner. How long will it be before the masterful displays of Fourth of July American patriotism echoing unity in difference segue neatly into depictions of fist pumping Trump supporters, the pulsating circuitry of veins in their throats transforming the chant "build the wall" into a crescendo of hatred?

How long before reflections of children of different races dancing together in Walden Pond are eagerly replaced by torch bearing neo-Nazis chanting "blood and soil"? Know they not that they have unwittingly screamed for the release of Barabbas over Jesus?

Let's not lose ourselves in the ideas of those who pervert religious beliefs for their own benefit. And I don't care how sincere they are. Let's not give up on science. Take evolution, for example. Present forms of life come from previous forms of life. Humans arose from nonhumans. We share a common ancestor with chimpanzees. These are facts, plain and simple. Theories explain facts. We evolved from ape-like ancestors. That's a fact. Unlike the case of creationism, facts don't claim absolute certainty. We only partially understand the mechanisms from which facts occur. There are new facts that we can discover to help us better understand how those mechanisms of evolution function. And yes, you can still be a Christian and accept these facts!

Here is a suggestion: Read what liberation theologians say about the Bible—that the Kingdom is realized in the praxis of social justice. There's much more to it than that, but we can't lose sight of the condemnation by Jesus of differentiating wealth, i.e., economic inequality. Prevent this lurid cult of Trump from growing stronger and from turning the recent history of the United States into a graveyard of secrets and a companion to infamy, transforming us all into the shadows of the people we once thought we were, or believed that we could become. Study the history of fascism and how it is co-constitutive with religious fanaticism. Square-up to the deceptions of the Trump administration. Work to comprehend the appeal that Hitler had on the German people in the 1930s so that you are able to recognize how charismatic leaders can serve the common good (strengthen our commonwealth) or—with the help of 4chan or Reddit—serve as instruments of obfuscation, deceit, hatred, chaos and genocide. A good contrast to be studied in the seminar room would be the charismatic leadership of trade unionist, socialist and founding member of the Industrial Workers of the World, Eugene Debs, and the dark, fetid charismatic presidency of Donald Trump. The survival of democracy and our basic humanity demands that we recognize this distinction. We cannot afford to live in sinful harmony with Trump's expiatory self-aggrandizement and festering narcissism.

We need instead to create interlaced networks of intracommunal negotiation and coarticulate communal patterns between our classrooms and surrounding communities so that we can critically reenter the vast and uncharted spaces of human sociality and solidarity. We are choking on the carnage that has defined us as a people, and our souls are in peril of being made crusty and scabrous, impervious to all those characteristics and qualities that our crestfallen ancestors had reasoned would, eventually, lead us to rise above the ashes of our inhumanity. We remain nation in decline, clumped upon a planet that is hurtling backwards towards its own prehistory. It is as if our opportunity to make history has been rescinded, until we learn to abandon our white Christian ethno-nationalism, until we face our settler colonial past, until we unlearn the presumptions that define our monstrous indecencies and patriotic cruelties. Our challenge at this moment is to resist the regime that slyly enables all of this before the furious allure of political depravity and the existential barbarity of being that follows in its wake ensures that we will reap the whirlwind. In the

meantime it is difficult not to take refuge in the future anterior, in a time that has not yet arrived. It is difficult not to feel nostalgia for a post-Trump social universe that has not yet occurred.

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RETHINKING CRITICAL PEDAGOGY-ISSN: 2717-8927
VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2. OCTOBER 2020.

Note: This article was first published by *Educational Philosophy and Theory*