

Marx and Education

By JEAN ANYON (Routledge, London, 2011), 128 pp., £19.99 (pbk), ISBN 13: 978-0-415-80330-4

Jean Anyon was a key source of reference in the 1980s, when I took up graduate studies in sociology of education. Her name figured prominently in a then burgeoning body of literature in critical education alongside those of Henry Giroux, Roger Dale, Michael Apple, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, Phillip Corrigan, Dorothy Smith, Martin Carnoy, Jane Thompson, David Livingstone and others. She was repeatedly cited in the area of critical education by many students attracted to this area of educational enquiry when I returned to my homeland, Malta, to lecture in the field. Given her standing as an important luminary in sociology of education and critical education more generally, and also given that the phrase 'we need Marx more than ever before' coined by my late friend, the recently deceased Paula Allman, is still firmly reverberating, I approached this slim volume with much anticipation. As a matter of fact, the current situation of global capitalism, and the protests of the 99% seen over the past few years, strike me as calling for a return to Marx. This vindicates those of us who have insisted all along that he provides the basis and method for the most thorough analysis of capitalism. I would however insist, following

Giroux, that the tradition of critical analysis to which he gave rise is constantly in need of revitalization—a point which I am sure Marx himself would have endorsed. In fact, what I expected from a book bearing the title of *Marx and Education* is a refreshing engagement with Marx's own ideas. My expectation appears understandable in light of recent developments, not least the collapse of the financial economy and its bail-out by the state through the use of unparalleled amounts of taxpayers' money. In so-doing, the state gave the lie to the Neoliberal dictum, a real myth, according to which, in this age of the *intensification* of globalization, the state has receded into the background. I say 'intensification' because Capital has since its inception been globalizing, as Marx and Engels (1848/1998) themselves asserted in *The Communist Manifesto*. Paula Allman provided such an engagement with Marx in her previous three volumes. She even managed to update her insights in light of the recent meltdown in the revised paperback version of her widely acclaimed *Critical Education Against Global Capitalism: Karl Marx and revolutionary critical education*. Of course, this work covers a lot of ground and goes deep into Marx's oeuvre, including all volumes of *Capital*—something one would not have expected Anyon to manage in a mere 106 pages of discussion. After all, Anyon was expected to give an account of how Marx's ideas impacted on educational debates and, to a certain extent, her own thinking and work.

Jean Anyon indeed discusses a contemporary issue related to Marx's notion of 'primitive accumulation' and its development by a secondary source, the Marxist geographer David Harvey. She relates this to the notion of 'accumulation by dispossession', which in my view has wider implica-

tions than she suggests. What Marx calls 'primitive accumulation' still goes on in Latin America and Africa, for instance. Eduardo Galeano intimates that the dispossession of the indigenous in the Amazon region of Brazil is a continuation of the kind of dispossession of the indigenous by the Conquistadors seen much earlier in history. All this is in addition to their extermination and entombment in the mines of Protosi', in modern-day Bolivia, and elsewhere, as mentioned by Marx in *Capital* Volume III. Having said this, I found Anyon's final chapter the most interesting of the volume, since it does furnish ideas and stimulate the imagination for educational strategies. Like Gramsci and others, not least contemporaries such as Henry Giroux, we need to conceive of education, here, in its broadest context and not as confined to the walls of formal institutions of learning such as schools and universities. The issue of the constant commodification, to use a Marx-inspired term, of once public spaces or 'commons' is by no means an original idea; many writers have been discussing this for several years. Giroux comes prominently to mind, especially his *Public Spaces/Private Lives*. With regard to new and refreshing thinking, I found this book rather disappointing. I would have expected much more material directly from Marx to figure in the thinking of a contemporary luminary selected to provide this sort of book. While the book was meant to provide an engagement with Marx's ideas as it affected educational debates and the author's trajectory, it was still meant to serve as an introduction. Of course, the book was intended to represent much more than simply an introduction to Marx's ideas on education.

This is not, however, the only disappointment. The major disappoint-

ment in my view is that the title of the volume is a misnomer. It implies that it is about Marx himself and education, yet I found very little Marx in the four chapters, and the little that there is features among his best-known quotes and discussions. The discussion is for the most part somewhat superficial. I even think that short shrift is made of Marx's highly sophisticated rendering of the labour theory of value: this cannot be crudely accounted for by a mere 'In order to make a profit, the capitalist must pay the worker less than the product s/he made can be sold for...'. How is this argued through, *calculated* and presented by Marx? In contrast, Allman, for example, excels at explicating such concepts.

For the most part, this booklet is about *Marxism* and education rather than *Marx* and education. Even here, the range of authors discussed or mentioned does little justice to the field. Did other authors not figure at all in Anyon's thinking or in the way she saw Marx-inspired educational thinking developing over the years? Was there nothing of note which could figure in the author's 'dialogue' with the 'foundational' figure that is Marx?

Completely overlooked is the work of Allman herself, which I would have considered *de rigueur* in a volume such as this. Like most of the other writers cited in this volume, Allman was originally from the US, although she resided and worked in England. Alas, British and other international contributions to Marxist debates in education appear virtually nonexistent within this volume. The rich debates which appeared in such important outlets as the *British Journal of Sociology of Education* are nowhere to be seen or felt. Among the contributors to that journal's debates is the foremost Canadian sociologist David W. Livingstone,

who has the rare ability of combining empirical and theoretical work in Historical Materialist sociology. Glenn Rikowski, Dave Hill, Mike Cole, Anthony Green, Helen Colley and Andy Green are nowhere to be seen. The last of these, whose extensive historical work on state formation involving ideas from Marx and Gramsci—among others—in his celebrated *Education and State Formation* is an example of the effect of Marx and Marxist thinking on educational research produced at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, is completely overlooked. One other Canadian, Peter McLaren, who has done much to 'marxify' the area to which Anyon gives prominence—namely critical pedagogy—is given slight reference. Roger Dale is totally absent, as are others outside the English-speaking world such as Angelo Broccoli and Heinz Sunker. As for Gramsci, surely the debate should extend beyond the usual hackneyed discussions about hegemony and 'counter hegemony' (a term Gramsci never used, perhaps to avoid a sense of binary opposition; they are in dialectical relationship). It should extend such discussions to take on board the notion of education within the context of the 'integral state'. This concept, developed by Gramsci and well highlighted by Peter D. Thomas in his impressive *The Gramscian Moment*, is a very pertinent issue today—despite neoliberal myths to the contrary—given its centrality in neoliberal times. And what of the compendia of studies on Gramsci and education published in English, featuring a range of authors from the English-speaking world and beyond, such as Attilio Monasta, Henry Giroux, Uwe Hirschfeld, Benedetto Fontana, Rosemary Dore, Deb Hill, Stanley Aronowitz, Peter Ives, Peter McLaren, Joseph A.

Buttigieg, Jerrold Kachur, Ursula Api-tzsch and W. John Morgan?

The latter wrote a five-part study on Marx, other Marxists and education which appeared in the *International Journal of University Adult Education*. But as many readers of this journal, who come from the adult education field, might wistfully point out, writers on adult education are all too frequently completely overlooked by their colleagues in sociology of education, philosophy of education and curriculum studies. I straddle the domains of sociology of education and adult education. This gives me the confidence to say that similar issues and quite complementary research exist in both fields. The two sets of writers, practitioners and researchers, however, tend to 'talk past the other' or remain smugly within their own framework of references. Hence Paula Allman, John Holst and Frank Youngman, as well as John Morgan, remain completely left out of discussions which centre for the most part on schooling. The only exceptions here are Carlos Alberto Torres and Raymond Allen Morrow, one an Argentinean and the other originally from rural California, who spent most of his academic life in Canada and has considerable expertise in popular education and studies on Mexico in particular. As for the other missing voices, this is both a pity and somewhat reflective of a much greater segmentation among the Left.

If there is one field that did much to advance Marxism in education then it is adult education, with its accounts of independent working-class education, the Plebs League, Workers' Universities, industrial democracy, Latin American popular education, learning within revolutionary and subaltern southern movements, and so on. Here the names of Brian Simon, Rachel Sharp, Liam Kane and Colin Waugh

come to mind. And in my view, the omission of Youngman and Allman is inexcusable. Much has been made of Allman's work: suffice to mention her discussion of one very important feature of Marx's ideas and its ramifications for education, best captured in style and content by none other than Paulo Freire in the first three chapters of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. This classic is mentioned *in passim* by Anyon but with little reference to the important feature of dialectics.

Allman tells us that the more one is familiar with Marx's 'tracking down' of 'inner connections' and 'relations' that are conceived of as 'unities of opposites', the more one begins to appreciate *Pedagogy of the Oppressed's* Marxian underpinning. The oppressed, in Freire's conception—echoing Marx—would be engaged in a struggle for humanization. In doing so, they would be engaged, in Marx's terms, in 'negating the negation'. In the latter sense, what this means is negation of the conditions for their ongoing dehumanization, imposed by those who are dehumanizing themselves as they dehumanize others. In another piece for which Allman wrote the first draft (the Preface to a special issue of *Convergence* in 1998, serving as a tribute to Freire who had died a year earlier), it is argued:

Dialectical thinkers understand the internal relations among all phenomena. In the case of human beings or groups, this is a social relation which could be harmonious but which, thus far in history, normally has been antagonistic, resulting in various social relations that Freire collectively refers to as the oppressor-oppressed relation (e.g. class relations, gender, race, colonial, etc.) The antagonism is often so great that nothing short of abolishing the dialectical relation will improve the situation.

When there are no longer the two opposing groups, the possibility emerges of human beings uniting in love, with a commitment to social justice and to care for all of our social and natural world.

In this volume there is very little, if any, discussion of another issue expounded by Allman and others that dates back to Aristotle but which takes on an important connotation in Marx—*Praxis*. This is central to a Marxian (that is deriving from Marx himself) project, as indicated by many other writers.

Frank Youngman's work is among the best in the historical materialist tradition. His *Adult Education and Socialist Pedagogy* includes a brilliant second chapter focusing on Marxism and Learning. In this book, Youngman identifies some of the basic principles of a Marxist approach to adult education. He uses these principles to examine the work of Paulo Freire, the main problem being that he runs the risk of de-contextualizing and therefore abstracting concepts.

All these references would, of course, have been unnecessary had the author kept to her brief (as suggested by the title) and focused solely on Marx himself, as Paula Allman did even in her introductory work: an equally slim but more engaging (with Marx, of course) introduction to Marx's revolutionary intellect, *On Marx: An Introduction to the Revolutionary Intellect of Karl Marx*. She even provides a long and detailed glossary of terms adopted by Marx, often in nuanced ways.

One further point is that Marx's and Gramsci's project was the overthrow of capitalist relations of production which extend beyond the realm of production itself to make their presence felt in larger social relations and human-earth relations. This entails

constant renegotiation of relations of hegemony prefigured by alternative relations emerging or existing in different pockets throughout the world—the sort of relations which the 'Occupy' movement sought to anticipate. While these relations are characterized by different forms of oppression, social class, as a key feature of capitalism, still makes its presence felt as the dominant transversal form. One of the authors to whom Anyon refers, Antonia Darder, makes this point very clearly in *Culture and Power in the Classroom*, of which a 20th anniversary edition has just been published. Darder focuses on the way that capitalism serves as a *totalizing force* structuring different forms of entities on gender, ethnic and nationality lines, with class having a strong transversal and overriding presence. Darder's writings and convictions in this regard ally her with such forceful writers as Ellen Meiksins Wood, whom she quotes approvingly on a number of occasions. This is how the imperatives of capitalist production are satisfied, in its constant exploitation of labour power, and how the segmentation of its global labour market occurs. The overthrow—even if this entails a long process of intellectual and moral reform—and not the amelioration of capitalism is the target of a Marxian project. I am not saying that Anyon clearly takes the 'ameliorative' view, but some of her formulations gesture in this direction. All told, this is an interesting short read with a stimulating final chapter; overall, however, it flatters to deceive.

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