

# BOOK REVIEW

**Insurrections: Education in an Age of Counter-Revolutionary Politics.** By Henry A. Giroux (2023), 224 pages. ISBN: 9781350350816. London: Bloomsbury Publishing. \$26.55 (paperback)

In a world increasingly shaped by autocratic and populist movements contributing to democratic backsliding, how has education become a target of these forces? More importantly, how can education become a tool for resistance and liberation?

Henry A. Giroux's book addresses these critical questions by examining how authoritarian, neoliberal, and fascist ideologies threaten democratic values while proposing education as a counterforce to these destructive influences. Giroux argues that while education has immense potential to resist authoritarianism, it is simultaneously under siege worldwide. The book explores how the erosion of democratic values—through neoliberal capitalism, white nationalism, and fascism—has infiltrated educational systems while also emphasizing education's transformative role in challenging these threats.

Giroux organizes the book into four key sections. In Part I, he identifies the rise of counter-revolutionary politics as a significant threat to democracy, particularly through the lenses of "necropolitics", "white nationalism", and the resurgence of "fascism." He critiques how these ideologies manipulate public sentiment and erase historical memory to maintain power, with the weaponization of fear, disinformation, and anti-intellectualism as central tactics. Part II shifts focus to the role of social media in exacerbating authoritarian agendas, labelling it a "disimagination machine" that spreads disinformation and stifles critical thinking. Giroux also examines how capitalist structures reinforce surveillance, deny accountability, and cultivate a culture of violence that aligns with authoritarian politics. These forces normalize oppressive ideologies, further marginalizing vulnerable groups. In Part III, Giroux critiques how cultural institutions and political structures shape authoritarian norms, urging education to foster anti-capitalist consciousness and rebuild democratic values. His vision for comprehensive politics calls for cultural, economic, and educational reforms to counter authoritarianism. In Part IV, Giroux advocates for an "insurrectional democracy", where education plays a central role in reclaiming democratic ideals, promoting social justice, and resisting authoritarian forces, emphasizing that education must be integrated into everyday politics to revitalize democratic engagement.

One of the book's strengths is its timeliness. Giroux's critique of post-Trump America and broader global authoritarian trends is an urgent call to action. His analysis of how cultural apparatuses normalize inequality and violence is incisive, illuminating the mechanisms through which power operates. Also, his interdisciplinary insights bridge education, politics, and cultural studies, offering a holistic critique of contemporary crises. Another strength is Giroux's visionary framework. He challenges readers to imagine a more just and equitable future by positioning education as central to societal transformation.

In sum, the book delivers a timely, interdisciplinary analysis of authoritarianism, white nationalism, and fascism, linking these forces to the commodification of education—a consequence of neoliberal capitalism. Giroux critiques cultural apparatuses such as social media for functioning as disinformation tools while acknowledging their potential to foster democratic engagement. His advocacy for critical pedagogy as the foundation of an "insurrectional democracy" underscores education's transformative role and serves as a call for "strategic resistance" (p. 146) to advance social justice and critical thinking. The book's integration of political theory, sociology, and cultural studies provides a robust framework for understanding contemporary political dynamics.

However, the book is not without its weaknesses. While Giroux excels in diagnosing the problems confronting education and democracy, his proposed solutions often remain abstract. Practical examples and case studies showing how these ideals can be implemented in diverse educational settings would strengthen his argument and make it more actionable for educators.

Moreover, the book's primary focus on the United States limits its global applicability. Giroux's analysis would benefit greatly from including comparative case studies from other parts of the world, where authoritarian regimes employ distinct strategies to undermine education and suppress dissent. For instance, examining the erosion of academic freedom in Europe, the politicization of education in Asia, or the role of critical pedagogy in resisting oppression in Latin America would provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of the global challenges facing education. Such comparative insights would also help readers understand how education systems in different cultural and political contexts have resisted or succumbed to authoritarianism, offering valuable lessons for educators worldwide.

Although Giroux's interdisciplinary approach—drawing from political theory, cultural criticism, and educational philosophy—provides a solid intellectual foundation, his intricate prose and theoretical depth may limit accessibility for readers outside academic circles. To broaden its appeal, Giroux could simplify some concepts and provide more actionable strategies for educators and activists working in real-world contexts. For example, practical pedagogical models that promote critical thinking and political resistance would have been valuable additions. This omission is particularly noticeable given Giroux's claim that "if a form of democratic resistance is to take place to avoid a fascist coup in the future, it is essential to develop a new language for equating freedom and democracy" (p. 102). However, he does not fully articulate what this new language entails or how it can be adequately created.

In conclusion, Giroux's latest work is a provocative and insightful critique of the forces undermining democracy. Giroux's call for education to become a site of resistance is both necessary and urgent in the face of rising authoritarianism. While the book excels in its theoretical depth and sharp critique of neoliberalism, authoritarianism, and white nationalism, it would benefit from a more accessible writing style, a broader global perspective, and more concrete strategies for implementation. Despite these limitations, Giroux's work is an essential contribution to the ongoing discourse on the role of education in resisting political oppression. Made even more relevant in light of Trump's reelection, it offers a compelling text for educators and activists committed to social justice and hope for reversing the global trend of democratic regression.

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