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On Facts and Values: An Analysis of Radical Curriculum Studies

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Curriculum theorizing has focused on how curricula ought to be constructed (prescriptive theory) and, to a lesser extent, on how curricula are formulated and implemented (explanatory theory).[1] There is a chasm separating the two approaches. The first type of theorizing focuses on questions of what ought to be and employs normative and instrumental appeals, while the second approach examines what is and utilizes de-

to evaluative and prescriptive pronouncements. An overriding concern for social justice guides and motivates this approach to the educational world. While such an explicit

capitalist schools subjugate individuals to an exploitative and unequal social system and that such forms of domination and inequality are morally reprehensible. They do not state boldly that inequality and exploitation are morally pernicious, but it is difficult

to argue for something left of a Rawlsian stance. For a society to be just it

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Marx's specific and explicit arguments continue the case saying that every right is a right of inequality. They are meant to show that no right which his contemporaries had advanced was preeminent enough to resolve conflicts without encountering a contrary, equally basic right. That the general problem had not been resolved even approximately, despite centuries of trying, made it a good bet, by Marx's time, that it was insoluble.[16]

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in Bronkart's elaboration of Marx's notion of freedom, it seems, in principle at least

Another obstacle to the identification and development of one's desires, capacities, and talents lies in an incorrect understanding of how society works. Self-determination

entails a recognition of which natural and social relations are and which are not

are similarly compelled. Since individuals are peculiarly human only when they are free, schools and their curricula which contribute to a restriction of this freedom are criticized.

EXPLANATORY INVESTIGATIONS

Marxists hail the acclaimed transcendence of the fact-value dualism as an achievement of the tradition, yet little is said about how this transcendence and its normative

beings are such that in order to be human they must be free. Furthermore, Marx

could, in principle, agree in their assessment of the validity of asserted causal claims.

> whom they are addressed, would freely agree to them. A critical theory addressed to the proletariat is confirmed, if its description of the objective situation of the proletariat in society is confirmed by normal observational means and if the members of the proletariat freely assent to the theory in particular to the views about freedom and coercion expressed in the theory.[38]

It is evident from Geuss's analysis that the validity of a critical theory depends on more than the empirical reliability of its causal claims, but it is also clear that an empirical assessment is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for the confirmation or

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crises, popular ideological equivocation or opposition is likely. Rejection can

SUMMARY

It is possible, within the Marxist tradition, to formulate a particular resolution to the fact-value dichotomy. According to this tradition, human beings are such that in order to be human they must be free. This resolution conjoins rather abstract factual and evaluative claims about human nature. We, in the radical tradition, now need to confront more specific questions concerning how this conjunction affects prescriptive and explanatory analyses of curricula and education. Here I have argued that the Marxist value for freedom and devaluation of capitalism should affect the explanatory focus of radical studies but not an assessment of an explanation's adequacy. Further-