Reviewed by *David Wolken*
Syracuse University
United States

Jan McArthur's (2013) *Rethinking Knowledge within Higher Education: Adorno and Social Justice* is a lucid and forceful inquiry into, and argument for, the unique role that higher education can play in contributing to social justice within and without the academic boundaries of specific educational institutions. A relatively short work at 160 pages, it is a refreshingly concise yet rich journey through a number of wide-ranging and complex topics such as higher education, critical pedagogy, knowledge, social justice, critical theory, academic research, and socioeconomic change. More specifically, McArthur argues that higher education, through a rethinking of the knowledge engaged there, can and should contribute to a more just and equitable social order both within the academy and throughout the world at large.

McArthur's (2013) approach is straightforward. As she explains, her analysis is grounded in a critical pedagogical perspective that stresses "the inter-relationship between education and society" (p. 17). Entailed in this approach is "a strong emphasis on the unbounded nature of learning, transcending the different moments that are captured within individual learning situations or systems" (p. 17). Also central to the project of critical pedagogy is a belief that the current social order is deeply inequitable and unjust. In this way, McArthur begins by situating higher
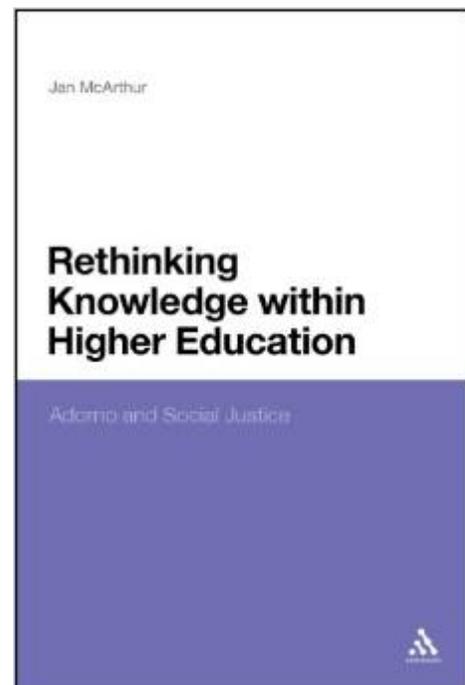
education as an institution and enterprise embedded in the larger social world, and thus having a purpose and responsibility to working toward greater social justice. The issue, however, according to McArthur, is that current and traditionally popular conceptions of higher education and the knowledge dealt with therein often result in a truncated vision for the social role of such institutions. Namely, "instrumental economic arguments" that narrowly and dangerously view higher education as merely serving the prevailing economic order and "traditional liberal ideas of education as a good in itself" (p. 19) are both insufficient for undergirding a higher education that can contribute to greater social justice. Hence, McArthur claims, the need for "truly rethinking the nature of knowledge in higher education, and our engagement with it, in ways that recognize the complex, and human, inter-relationships between the social and economic spheres and between thinking and doing" (p. 19).

The book is organized into three main parts. The first part (chs. 1 & 2) establishes the foundation of critical pedagogy and social justice on which the rest of McArthur's analysis is built. The second part (chs. 3-6) details in-depth four main characteristics of knowledge and knowledge engagement she argues should feature in higher education. Summarily, these are: 1) knowledge should be *not easily known*; 2) knowledge engagement should be dynamic, unpredictable, and non-standardized; 3) the metaphors of *exile*, *sanctuary,* and *diaspora* can inform the social experience of critical academics and students; and 4) *theory* and *practice* should not be dichotomized but blended in complex ways. The final part (ch. 7) brings together the whole work and suggests avenues for further thought.

Part One: Adorno, Social Justice, and Critical Pedagogy

After elaborating on the aforementioned interrelationship of higher education and the social world, McArthur details in chapter one how her rethinking of knowledge is grounded in the critical theory of Theodor Adorno. The two main concepts she draws from Adorno are "negative dialectics" and "non-identity." Together, these concepts fortify an approach that aims to foreground the complexity, provisionality, dynamism, and unpredictability of the epistemological enterprise. Here I

will only briefly outline these notions; their use in McArthur's analysis is more fully developed in chapters 3 through 6.

Adorno's advocacy of seeking understanding through non-identity is rooted in the tension between and the irreducibility of the universal to the particular, and vice versa. That is, it speaks of the "imperfect match between thought and thing" (p. 20). As McArthur explains, "Adorno argues that attempts to tie objects into tidy definitions and identities reflects our impulse to dominate nature, one of the most problematic legacies of the Enlightenment" (p. 20). Given this, for Adorno and McArthur, true, accurate, and responsible understanding of an object, thing, or person can only be achieved by thinking "through the mutual dialectic between universal and particular" (p. 20).

Extending the importance of non-identity is Adorno's negative dialectics, a concept named as such in that it intentionally rejects a dialectics that works through thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Conversely, negative dialectics works through *negation* and thus perpetual suspension of qualities such as clarity, certainty, consistency, and coherence. On this account, rigorous, accurate, worthwhile and useful knowledge is characterized instead by uncertainty, complexity, tension, paradox, and even contradictions. Adorno admonishes attempts at system building that seek to eradicate these features of the knowing process; he and McArthur argue that "such attempts rigidify or trap understanding rather than enhancing it" (p. 20).

Negative dialectics stresses the contested, changing, and ultimately provisional nature of knowledge and truth. While Adorno allows that there might be temporary or partial "resting places" in the pursuit of knowledge, there is no final arrival or completion. In this way, McArthur argues along with Adorno, clear, simple, agreed-upon definitions are not the mark of the legitimacy or truth of an idea. Consequently, educators and students should not dismiss concepts that are not easily defined, such as "freedom" or "social justice." Here it can be seen why Adorno advocates for the allowance of inconsistency, contradictions, and uncertainty in epistemological endeavors. For in addressing complex and dynamic social issues and ideas, efforts to neatly and neutrally compartmentalize concepts into a comprehensive system will only stifle the potential for critical thought and engagement in such matters. The aim for a critical theorist,

he insists, should not be abstract system building but the employing of "concepts in order to bring the subject, whatever it may be, to life" (Adorno as cited by McArthur, 2013, p. 21).

Importantly, McArthur stresses that she is not arguing for a relativist stance. On the contrary, she is focused on developing a critical position wherein "the essence of knowing is to privilege uncertainty, different perspectives, provisionality, and even contradictions" (p. 23).

Keeping with the spirit of negative dialectics and non-identity, McArthur likewise conceptualizes the notion of "social justice" in a dynamic, multifaceted, open-ended manner. She argues that it is "best comprehended as a *constellation* of concerns and values" (p. 24, emphasis original). She notes four key elements to her view of social justice. First, she stresses that it cannot be easily, simplistically, or comprehensively defined; it must retain a degree of imperfection and complexity to enable its diverse interpretation and pursuit in a variety of unique and changing contexts. Second, McArthur suggests that working toward greater social justice involves embracing the mutual-constitution of process and outcome. Here she diverges from other theorists such as Martha Nussbaum who emphasize an outcome-oriented approach and John Rawls who stresses the primacy of achieving justice through appropriate processes. Rather than assigning more importance to one or the other, McArthur suggests that greater justice obtains in its realization through both procedure *and* end goals.

This focusing on the mediation between process and outcome mirrors the third aspect of social justice, namely the inter-relationships among individuals as well as between individuals and society. As McArthur summarizes, "we cannot work towards social justice by focusing either on individual rights or the nature of society; instead social justice emerges through the dialectic between the two" (p. 26). Individuals are both unique yet inescapably formed through complex social associations, while society involves macro-level phenomena yet is constituted by individuals. Thus, a robust conception of justice must take seriously this dynamic interplay between the individual/social and particular/universal.

Finally, the animating notion of social justice for McArthur's analysis is not a vision of social justice based on some far-off, pre-established yet heretofore unattained

utopia. Given the complex and ever-changing nature of
social reality, there can be no perfect idea of social justice
at which to aim. Instead, we could say that the "end-goal"
is embedded in the process of "[aiming]…to enhance
justice and minimize injustice" (p. 29).

Chapter two, "Approaches to Critical Theory and
Critical Pedagogy," completes the foundation for the book
as McArthur explicates her conception of critical pedagogy
as informed by Adorno and other influences from critical
theory, both past and present. Locating the origin of critical
theory in the work of Karl Marx, she explains that critical
"analysis is constantly informed by a search for hidden or
distorted meanings, multiple perspectives and an awareness
of how power relationships and other social pathologies can
affect the social world being studied" (p. 31). Further,
McArthur claims that critical theory not only "[rejects] both
positivist approaches to research and ungrounded
postmodern interpretations," it even "questions the whole
notion of such spectrums, and instead suggests that
understanding is achieved through an ongoing dialectic and
mediation between different ideas and perspectives" (p.
31). With this overview in place, McArthur then delves into
the application of critical theory to education: critical
pedagogy.

For McArthur, critical pedagogy is a political
project fundamentally based in a commitment to thinking
and working toward greater social justice. Noting the vast
array of perspectives and elements giving life to the project,
she frames her discussion around three issues prominent
among proponents of critical pedagogy. These are: 1)
whether it should be grounded in specific identities or is a
more general effort; 2) Marxist/modernist foundations in
contention with postmodernism; and 3) theoretical versus
applied approaches. I will hereafter outline McArthur's
position in these three areas while noting particularly that
her discussion is much richer and developed than there is
space to recount here.

Concerning identity-based approaches, McArthur
notes the rise in recent years of such pedagogies as feminist
pedagogy, black pedagogy, queer pedagogy, and red/Native
American pedagogy. While she acknowledges the
importance of such social-group identity/experience, she
suggests that Adorno's notion of "non-identity" can guard
against a potential "over-reliance on general categories or
concepts" (such as "black female," "queer Latino," or "gay
white male able-bodied middle-class American" as

comprehensively defining a given individual) (p. 38). Non-identity here does not simply discard all such social identities, it merely insists that every individual is also unique, idiosyncratic, and irreducible to established categories.

McArthur next addresses the modern versus postmodern debates that have troubled the field recently. She starts by reminding the reader that Adorno and the rest of the Frankfurt School drew heavily from Marx, and declares that she in turn is "very keen that we bring Marxism back in…" (p. 39). Her general critique of postmodernism is that in rejecting any "possibility of shared notions of reason or truth" (p. 40) and avoiding serious study of political economy, such an approach ultimately lacks the critical rigor necessary for robust social analysis and material action. McArthur instead advocates a humanist Marxist perspective, one rooted in modernist thought but importantly "in an ongoing dialogue with Marx's ideas rather than slavishly following them" (p. 39).

To conclude this chapter and anticipate chapter six, McArthur turns to the question of whether critical pedagogy is more of an applied or a theoretical project. In a word, she answers that the question is founded on a false binary. For Adorno and McArthur, "theory is itself always a form of practice and practice always requires the input of thought or theory" (p. 44). Indeed, she asserts, "the whole concept of *applying* ideas or theories is misconceived" (p. 46, emphasis original). Moreover, critical pedagogy is not and should not be a unified, monolithic movement or simple method of following prescribed steps and practices. Instead, the project requires a variety of interrelated, contextualized, collaborative, and sometimes even contradictory efforts made on the "individual (micro), group (meso) and institutional or national (macro) levels of change" (p. 46).

Part Two: Rethinking Knowledge in Higher Education – Four Key Elements

In chapter three, McArthur discusses the first of four key features of knowledge and knowing that she proposes should characterize higher education: knowledge should be *not easily known.* She aptly summarizes the main contours of the chapter in the following.

> Adorno's work provides a defense of
> knowledge in which rigor arises out of its
> complex and contested nature, rather than
> succumbing to the illusionary virtues
> promoted by an audit or commercialized
> academic culture. In contrast we can
> celebrate a higher education in which
> knowing is difficult, and frequently
> unsettling, and is all the more important for
> those traits.

McArthur frames her argument within the current context of the paradoxical and contradictory link between higher education and a knowledge-based socioeconomic milieu. Though the complexities of the contemporary scene cannot be fully recounted here, the issues roughly concern the fact that while knowledge (and/or information, which is not the same as but is often conflated with knowledge) is often seen to be increasingly important in today's economy and social development, the nature of knowledge and relevance of higher education are often simultaneously questioned. For instance, stakeholders from the worlds of corporate business and politics often look skeptically if not condescendingly on forms of knowledge that do not have immediate, direct, and efficient application to the economic needs of society. Such postures toward knowledge and research in the academy are aspects of the commercialized "audit culture" and effectively seek to control knowledge production and engagement based on efficiency, predictability, clarity, and the instrumental use of knowledge for economic ends.

At a time when knowledge is understood to be highly important but its nature and proper use are highly contested, McArthur urges, it is not enough to merely "harness the knowledge within higher education to contribute to greater social justice, but to fundamentally rethink the nature of the knowledge engaged with" (p. 53). She proposes that knowledge geared toward social justice should be nuanced, complex, contested, and dynamic. These characteristics are offered as intentionally antithetical to the positivistic, scientistic construal of knowledge that tries to force certainty, fixedness, finality, and clarity as the exclusive criteria of true, relevant, and valuable knowledge. Indeed, for Adorno and McArthur, the issue with the latter approach is that intentionally or not, such approaches to knowledge inevitably work to reinforce the status quo. Recalling the critical pedagogical premise

that the current social order is unjust and oppressive, it is clear why mainstream, status-quo supporting knowledge runs contrary to any social justice project.
Importantly, McArthur clarifies that in suggesting that knowledge should not be easily known, she is not implicitly advocating for an ivory-tower elitism in higher education. The key point is that in addressing some of the social challenges involved in working toward greater justice, complex, difficult, and specialized types of knowledge are often necessary, and higher education should be a place where such knowledge is formed and engaged. By stressing complexity, contestation, and dynamism as features of knowledge, she is thereby avoiding the extreme and limiting poles of various dualisms. For instance, this avoids both inaccessible elitism and excessive simplicity; status-quo supporting certainty/control and groundless relativism; narrow instrumentalism and esoteric obscurity. Such extremes are avoided by constantly emphasizing the socially-mediated, dynamic, provisional, and incomplete nature of knowledge.

Another potential dichotomized approach that McArthur avoids concerns disciplinary v. interdisciplinary formations and pursuits of knowledge. I can only briefly mention this here, unfortunately, as her discussion of this issue is quite incisive. Noting the recent popularity of interdisciplinarity in higher education, McArthur cautions against a hastily-made wholesale dismissing of disciplinarity. Again, there are issues on "both sides," so to speak. Seeking interdisciplinarity as a comprehensive paradigm is dangerous in that it can flatten the theoretical landscape and lose the critical, rigorous edge necessary for social justice work (p. 67-68). Moreover, interdisciplinarity by definition relies on distinct academic disciplines to give it substance. For McArthur, the key is to maintain a disciplinarity characterized not by authoritarian policing of established academic and theoretical borders but by a dynamic mediation among disciplines with porous and ever-shifting boundaries. In sum, her argument is for a *critical interdisciplinarity* that makes use of an equally critical disciplinarity animated by complex, contested, dynamic, and nuanced knowledge.

The next three chapters (chs. 4, 5, 6) expand on and develop many of the themes that featured in chapter three, each with its own key focus. In chapter four, "Beyond Standardized Engagement with Knowledge," McArthur takes the conceptualization of knowledge from the previous

chapter and asks *how* such knowledge should be *engaged*. Consistent with the spirit of her analysis as informed by Adorno, she suggests that engaging with knowledge in higher education is and should be "an inherently uncertain activity" (p. 77). McArthur approaches this discussion by considering what it is like for students to encounter knowledge in higher education. In this context she further explores the issues that stem from an audit culture, namely the pitfalls of standardization in pedagogy and the curricular dimensions of disciplinarity.

Defining an audit culture as grounded in "a desire to find certain and transparent ways to 'know' what is going on" (p. 80), McArthur shows that such aims often lead to an uncritical and inhumane standardization of the higher education experience, both through supposed standards of quality and a pedagogical, curricular strategy made uniform by a desire for predictability, control, and consistency. She is not against standards and quality *per se*, but is rather concerned with efforts to ensure quality that result in an avoidance of risk at all costs and that presents material as complete, predetermined, fixed information which can only be passively received by students.

McArthur argues that critical pedagogy insists on a learning experience that takes seriously the uniqueness of each student and encourages them to actively participate in the discovery, discussion, questioning, and constructing of knowledge. Rendered such, "learning outcomes" cannot be predetermined or guaranteed. Consequently, there is always a level of risk involved in critical knowledge projects (and here McArthur helpfully distinguishes *risk* from *hazard*, noting that the former should be embraced but not the latter). To capture these dynamics, McArthur suggests that disciplinary curricula and knowledge should be seen and presented as a *palimpsest*, a thing likened to…a writing surface, esp. in having been reused or altered while still retaining traces of its earlier form; a multilayered record'" (p. 91). Rather than absently receiving the established facts of canons, students engaging disciplinary knowledge as a palimpsest are able to critically wrestle with what is being offered and leave their own mark in the process. This approach utilizes non-identity and negative dialectics in that it again works through the mediation between the extant knowledge and the knower who partakes in constructing that knowledge while also being partially constituted by it.

In chapter five, "The Social Implications of Engaging with Knowledge in Higher Education," McArthur expands on the social dynamics of knowing in higher education. Here her primary concern is to answer the following question, which inevitably flows from the critical pedagogic assertion that the social order – which includes higher education – is deeply unjust:

> [How are we to] seek greater fairness or justice from within a society that is itself unjust? My aim in this chapter is to explore how both students and academics can spend time engaging with knowledge in higher education in ways that are connected to the broader social realm and yet retain some freedom from the distortions and pathologies of prevailing, mainstream society (pp. 99-100).

McArthur further explains how this tension in critically resisting the social scene in which one is immersed "exemplifies negative dialectics" (p. 100). To draw this out, she employs three metaphors that are grounded in this tension: *exile, sanctuary,* and *diaspora*. Each of these serves not only as conceptual ideas but as "moments of being within higher education" (p. 119).

For McArthur, exile speaks to the experience of being outside of and/or "other" in relation to the mainstream. Here she is reflecting on the real lived experiences of critical theorists such as Adorno, the Frankfurt School, and Paulo Freire, all of whom could be said to have lived and worked in exile from their immediate social milieu. Yet while this sense of exile is common for critical academics, whether literally or figuratively, McArthur reminds us that the critical focus is still importantly fixed on the world that shuns that very focus. In other words, the question becomes "how, then, does the experience of exile mediate back into our ongoing participation in the public realm, which is a primary requirement of active, democratic citizenship?" (p. 102).

Continuing in this vein of mediation, the second metaphor of sanctuary is meant to "[evoke] something of the participative nature of a public but safe space" (p. 108). Higher education should act as a sort of sanctuary for critical thought and action. Importantly, though, McArthur does not mean 'safe' in terms of somehow sidestepping the uncertain, difficult, uncomfortable realities one is studying. Indeed, higher education as sanctuary would exist as a

place in which to safely confront and embrace those very qualities of critical knowledge projects. Such a space would enable and facilitate thinking outside and beyond the mainstream while still being (sometimes painfully) inextricably tied to it.

Giving further expression to the experiences of exile and sanctuary is the metaphor of diaspora as a broadly guiding notion of how critical community might exist in higher education. Diaspora used here is meant to help understand what the collective – yet diverse and by no means unified – experiences of different individuals and social groupings in higher education might be like. As McArthur explains, "it suggests an alternative form of togetherness…[one] formed by fragmentary, rather than unified or uniform, facets" (p. 113).

The theme of non-identity is particularly relevant for diaspora. Recalling its earlier formulation, non-identity emphasizes the necessity of understanding individuals through the *mediation between* their idiosyncrasies and their larger social belongings. Given that each individual exists at the intersections of numerous social groups/identities/locations, focusing on the mediation allows people freedom to be who they truly are instead of forcing them to "choose between or artificially separate aspects of who they are" (p. 114).

McArthur concludes the chapter by clarifying that these metaphors of being and community are not meant to invoke visions of progressive utopianism or cosmopolitanism. Rather, she intentionally uses these notions for the fact that they often historically arise from marginalized, exiled, or otherwise victimized peoples. Suggesting that higher education might embody a collective of diasporas retains the prominence of dynamism, contestation, contradiction, discomfort, and uncertainty that feature in the type of knowledge she advocates. In the end, "higher education as spaces of exile, sanctuary and diasporas can, I suggest, contribute to…*publicly mediated freedom*" (p. 118, emphasis original).

In the final of the four core chapters of the book, chapter six, "Challenging the Theory – Practice Dichotomy," McArthur expands on the above mentioned dialectic between theory and practice. She first details in more depth Adorno's thoughts on how to conceptualize theory and practice, and then discusses the implications of this in three key areas that inform the overall project of the

book. Those three questions concern the supposed vocational/professional v. academic divide, the importance of critique in social change, and how higher education can contribute to a better and more critically informed citizenry.

Adorno's approach to the theory v. practice debate begins by rejecting the dichotomy. He insists that there is no sharp distinction between the two; thinking is a behavior, a doing, a practice, and "theory [is] a form of praxis" (as cited by McArthur, p. 122-23). There is a discontinuous relationship between the two elements as each informs and is intertwined in the other, and yet they are not one in the same. Importantly, argues Adorno, practice must not dominate theory, as this leads to a degeneration of practice into "mere practicality, taking the form of anti-theoretical and highly instrumental forms of action" (p. 123).

That theory and practice are mutually-constitutive poles of a complex relationship has significant implications for higher education geared toward social justice. Concerning what is often considered the distinction between vocational or professional and academic knowledge and education, McArthur argues that we should be hesitant to mark any such clear boundaries. She explains that there is no such thing as "purely" vocational or instrumental professions or fields – such as aeronautical engineering, as one author suggested – because all types of work have social, ethical, and moral dimensions (p. 127). A related dimension of this, she further claims, is that the dialectic between theory and practice mimics/informs the mediation between a person and his/her work. One's experience of work is an integral part of one's self-conception and often factors significantly into a sense of well-being (or lack thereof).

Another key insight of the theory/practice interrelationship is in pointing to the danger of what Adorno calls the "'practical pre-censorship of theory'" (p. 124). Basically, this refers to the attempt to pre-determine/secure the practical application and impact of academic research and theory. McArthur, augmenting Adorno's thought, argues that this is in principle a dubious endeavor and practically self-defeating. As Adorno explains, "it is the 'theory that is not conceived as an instruction for its realization [that] should have the most hope for its realization'" (p. 131). Helpfully qualifying these assertions, McArthur explains that it is not that there

should never be attempts to guide and understand research and theorizing in higher education; rather, it is that there must be guards against demands for certainty, control, and transparency that restrict possibilities and complexities in knowledge and research (p. 132).

The final two sections of chapter six address the overlapping themes of critique as essential for social change and how higher education can support a critical citizenry. For Adorno and McArthur, social justice requires a public that lives based on a critique of the mainstream rather than "mere" opinion. McArthur relates mere opinion as "thought divorced from practice" (p. 136), or as Adorno states, "opinion is above all consciousness that does not yet have its object" (as cited by McArthur, p. 136). Progress does not occur as a result of incorporating more people into the existing mainstream, but by challenging the mainstream (p. 139). And if public opinion is that which derives legitimacy merely from what is most popular (as Adorno claims it is), critique must be the basis for more just social change.

Indeed, Adorno fundamentally links democracy to critique: "Critique is essential to all democracy. Not only does democracy require the freedom to criticize…Democracy is nothing less than defined by critique" (as cited by McArthur, p. 141). McArthur then takes these notions and explores how higher education – as a site in which complex, contested knowledge is engaged in a dynamic, critical, publicly-mediated way – can uniquely contribute to a better informed and critically-minded citizenry. For instance, she suggests that despite their importance and obvious relevance to critical pedagogy, academic fields such as cultural studies have often received too much emphasis in the literature on critical pedagogy. At least as important to higher education contributing to greater justice, she argues, is a critical approach to those professional and vocational subjects that are so often and problematically separated from traditionally "academic" or "theoretical" pursuits. She gives examples in medicine and the natural sciences to demonstrate how her analysis can render these endeavors key areas in which professionals might work toward applying the insights of critical pedagogy. Ultimately, for Adorno and McArthur, education aimed at a just democracy must take the form of "*education for maturity*" (p. 145, emphasis original) rather than education as tutelage. The latter involves teaching and learning that produces mere opinion and reinforces the

status quo, while the former conceives of maturity according the many characteristics of knowledge and knowledge engagement that McArthur develops throughout her book.

Part Three: Conclusion and Discussion

The last chapter, "Towards a Higher Education Transcending Both the Elite and the Mainstream," weaves together all of the preceding chapters into a cogent summary of McArthur's overall project of rethinking knowledge within higher education. She offers some thoughts on how her analysis might inform current issues within higher education, and also suggests areas for further thinking and development. In addition, she anticipates a few potential criticisms of her use of Adorno for such a project and deftly shows them to miss the mark in fundamental ways (p. 160). Indeed, careful readers of *Rethinking Knowledge* will likely compile a set of questions and concerns with various aspects of McArthur's position. For instance, one might feel dissatisfied with her arguably insufficient and hasty rejection of postmodernism, especially given the difficulty in even defining postmodernism as a coherent or unified position. As an example of just one issue here, she does not distinguish between what some scholars regard as a more truly *post*modernism as distinct from an antithetical *anti*modernism (Burbules & Rice, 1991). Another concern for readers might surface in the vein of confusion or lack of specificity regarding McArthur's focus and terms. For instance, what exactly qualifies as "higher education?" How is she understanding the "mainstream" sociocultural phenomena she critiques so much? That is, what distinguishes something "mainstream" from something more critical and social justice-engendering? And, are these views relevant for higher education in any social milieu, or only modern Western countries?

To these queries I cannot give complete answers, nor do I think McArthur would even desire to. That is, I would remind the reader that she is here principally concerned with *rethinking knowledge*, not providing a blueprint for universal policy development or easy application of research to concrete social problems. Instead, she is advocating an approach to these questions – to the question of knowledge within higher education – that stresses the complexity, tenuousness, difficulty, and

provisionality of epistemological pursuits in higher education. And, given this, she rightly emphasizes that critical pedagogical projects should not be conceptualized and applied in universalistic terms but always variously interpreted and creatively contextualized in local situations.

Thus, to truly grasp the spirit of what McArthur is after would involve not seeking finality and definitiveness in her arguments but taking her thoughts as invitations to engage in critical contestation with those very arguments. As she says, "perhaps more than anything else, Adorno's work is a constant challenge to docility and this needs to be the aim of critical higher education" (p. 85-86). I take her own work as a constant challenge as well, a challenge to seek not answers or prescriptions for action but more creative, complex, deep, and dynamic knowledge for and within higher education and the world at large. In this she succeeds commendably, and I therefore highly recommend this book to anyone interested in higher education in any way.

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About the Reviewer

David Wolken is a PhD student in the Cultural Foundations of Education department in the School of Education at Syracuse University in Syracuse, NY. He specializes in the Philosophy of Education with particular interests in higher education, social justice pedagogy, the philosophy of educational research, philosophy as a way of life, and the intellectual history of American higher education.

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