

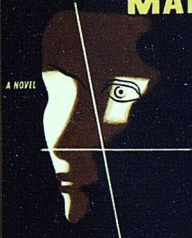
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JERRY MANDER

SEVEN YEAR ARGUMENTS FOR THE ELIMINATION OF TELEVISION

Books For CRITICAL Consciousness



What Is Globalization?

Ulrich Beck

40
Reviews

J. Progler



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ROGUE STATE

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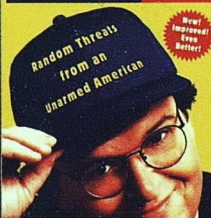
AFTER THE EMPIRE

The Breakdown of the American Order



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MICHAEL MOORE
DOWNSIZE THIS!



New York Times Bestseller

KINDER-CULTURE

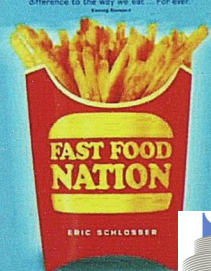
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TUN DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD

BOOKS FOR CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Forty Reviews

J. Progler

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For Idris, so that we read.





Contents

Foreword	9
Preface	13
1. AFRICAN MUSLIMS IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles	23
2. AFTER THE EMPIRE The Breakdown of the American Order	29
3. BEYOND HYPOCRISY Decoding the News in an Age of Propaganda	37
4. CONSUMER CULTURE AND TV PROGRAMMING	44
5. CONSUMING ENVIRONMENTS Television and Commercial Culture	52
6. CULTURE JAM The Uncooling of America	59
7. THE CULTURE OF DENIAL Why the Environmental Movement Needs a Strategy for Reforming Universities and Public Schools	67
8. DESCHOOLING SOCIETY	74

9.	DR. STRANGELOVE'S AMERICA Society and Culture in the Atomic Age	81
10.	DOWNSIZE THIS! Random Threats from an Unarmed American	90
11.	EDUCATING FOR AN ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE CULTURE Rethinking Moral Education, Creativity, Intelligence, and Other Modern Orthodoxies	97
12.	FAST FOOD NATION What the All-American Meal is Doing to the World	104
13.	HOW DO WE TELL THE WORKERS? The Socioeconomic Foundations of Work and Vocational Education	113
14.	IN THE ABSENCE OF THE SACRED The Failure of Technology and the Survival of the Indian Nations	118
15.	THE INDIVIDUALIZED SOCIETY	125
16.	INVISIBLE MAN	132
17.	ISLAM AND ARABS IN EARLY AMERICAN THOUGHT The Roots of Orientalism in America	138
18.	KINDERCULTURE The Corporate Construction of Childhood	146
19.	LET THEM EAT DATA How Computers Affect Education, Cultural Diversity, and the Prospects of Ecological Sustainability	154

20.	METAL OF DISHONOR How the Pentagon Radiates Soldiers and Civilians with Depleted Uranium Weapons	161
21.	NON-WESTERN EDUCATIONAL TRADITIONS Alternative Approaches to Educational Thought and Practice	169
22.	ONE SIZE FITS FEW The Folly of Educational Standards	176
23.	PALESTINE'S CHILDREN Returning to Haifa, Men in the Sun and Other Stories	181
24.	A PEOPLE'S ECOLOGY Explorations in Sustainable Living	187
25.	RETHINKING WORLD HISTORY Essays on Europe, Islam and World History	192
26.	ROBOT Mere Machine to Transcendent Mind	199
27.	ROGUE STATE A Guide to the World's Only Superpower	204
28.	STEPS TO AN ECOLOGY OF MIND	211
29.	STUPID WHITE MEN And Other Sorry Excuses for the State of the Nation	216
30.	TAKING BACK OUR LIVES IN THE AGE OF CORPORATE DOMINANCE	221

31.	TAKING THE RISK OUT OF DEMOCRACY Corporate Propaganda Versus Freedom and Liberty	226
32.	THE TERROR OF THE MACHINE Technology, Work, Gender, and Ecology on the U.S.-Mexico Border	234
33.	A TIME BEFORE DECEPTION: Truth in Communication, Culture, and Ethics	241
34.	THE TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE IN MEDIEVAL CAIRO A Social History of Islamic Education	248
35.	THE TRIPLE HELIX Gene, Organism, and Environment	257
36.	TRIUMPH OF THE IMAGE The Media's War in the Persian Gulf — a Global Perspective	264
37.	THE UNDERGROUND HISTORY OF AMERICAN EDUCATION An Intimate Investigation into the Problem of Modern Schooling	270
38.	THE VITAL ILLUSION	277
39.	WHAT IS GLOBALIZATION?	284
40.	WHAT IS INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE? Voices from the Academy	291
	Index	297

Foreword

THE humbling request for a Foreword to this esteemed book cannot come at a more defining moment. It coincided with at least three international events, namely, the Copenhagen Conference where the consensus to mitigate climate change was hotly debated in the Danish capital; the 2009 Global Higher Education Forum (GHEF) in Penang, Malaysia, and also the 7th World Conference on Muslim Education (WCOME) was about to begin near Malaysia's capital city. All these events have a very symbolic meaning for this book and the profound messages it contains.

For instance, as though to summarise the outcome of the United Nations Climate Change Conference 2009, the UN Secretary-General was quoted as saying: 'Finally we sealed a deal. The Copenhagen Accord may not be everything everyone had hoped for, but this... is an important beginning.' The question in everyone's mind is: 'an important beginning' to what? Could it be a beginning of an end, our self-destruction as it were? By all counts this is perhaps the most likely answer. After all the Accord has been described as 'weaker than a legally binding treaty and weaker even than the "political" deal many had foreseen.' The reasons why are pervasive throughout this invaluable book, and it is not just confined to issues of climate change, given the far greater ramifications towards humanity than we care to admit. More significantly, the line that divides the Global North and Global South is becoming even more marked; so too between the haves and the have-nots! The exploiters and the exploited!

While these largely point to a bleak and grim future, the GHEF 2009 in many ways broke new grounds with respect to

what the future means, and the challenges it would have to face. It is not all gloom-and-doom if we are able to pitch our priorities correctly in response to the demands of the future. Many of these are also implied in the book, beyond just matters relating to education per se. But there is no doubt that ultimately all will have to start with education both as a means and also an end.

Finally, the 7th WCOME reminded us that another world is possible! That more than a millennium ago, there was already a Golden Age of Learning which lasted for more than 800 years in Andalusia, the Muslim Spain. There was then a vibrant community of scholars (some called 'paradise of scholars') who were motivated to illuminate the society around them through truth and knowledge, while the rest of Europe was still languishing in darkness and ignorance. Unfortunately, today's Age of Learning (if there is still one) is being tainted by the domineering marketplace turning it into an 'Age of Earning' instead predicated on commercialisation, consumerism and the corruption of knowledge by the world of corporacracy. Learning as currently practised, contradicts the wisdom of Confucius (551-479 BC) who taught that learning is not about having (read, earning), rather is about *being* (emphasis added). Indeed, it is the state of being of the world that should be of ultimate concern to each one of its inhabitants. In doing so we must quickly move beyond the superficial understanding of 'human capital' to a deeper meaning of 'human beings'.

It is thus not a coincidence to read the State of the World Report 2010 on 'Transforming Cultures' pointing out that 'consumerism has engulfed human cultures and Earth's ecosystems. Left unaddressed, we risk global disaster. But if we channel this wave, intentionally transforming our cultures to center on sustainability, we will not only prevent catastrophe, but may usher in an era of sustainability—one that allows all people to thrive while protecting, even restoring, Earth.'

In other words, there is much to be done, but not if we are unaware what is to be 'undone' and 'redone.' Doing more of the same without 'critical consciousness', as highlighted in this book, will only mean that we continue on the path of global uncertainty and hasten our eventual self-destruction. This is why the effort by author

Yusef J Progler is of immense value by bringing together the relevant works of prominent scholars who are themselves in many ways activists, practitioners and concerned global citizens, so that readers can be engaged and persuaded to follow through with the struggle to build much needed critical support towards a worthy cause.

We are now almost a decade into the new millennium, and in the next five years will see the concluding of many global agenda sponsored by the United Nations, and endorsed by world leaders alike. The agenda include, the Millennium Development Goals, Education for All, and Education for Sustainable Development, to name but a few. As it stands not much has been achieved at the global level despite the numerous pledges and promises. Still it is not over yet, even if time is fast running out. We must keep on trying as advocated by the German playwright and novelist, Johann Goethe (1749-1832): 'Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do.'

On that optimistic note I would like to congratulate Yusef J Progler for his yet another commendable accomplishment and I am sure that this book will go a long way to convince readers that we must do something, collectively, within our means if we are to shape a better future for the generations that come after us.

Dzulkifli Abdul Razak

Vice-Chancellor,

Universiti Sains Malaysia,

Penang, Malaysia

December 2009/Muharram 1431

P r e f a c e

THERE is a long standing tradition in Islamic scholarship that involves commentary on forty 'hadith,' or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. Islamic scholars through the ages have developed this tradition by selecting and commenting on forty from among the many thousands of prophetic sayings compiled in the hadith literature. By the 13th century, the Syrian scholar Imam Nawawi, author of one such collection still revered today, noted that he was merely emulating the many scholars before him who had also selected and commented upon forty hadith, adding that many of these previous collections were built around specific themes ranging from the basic rules of religion to such matters as asceticism and sermons. In 1937, while teaching at a seminary in Qum, Imam Khomeini penned his own collection of forty hadith on the theme of ethical conduct, about which he said his intention was 'to compile them with an appropriate explanation of each that can be applied to the general conditions of the people.' From this tradition we can perhaps extrapolate two useful general principles, that forty appears to be a sufficient number of items to develop a particular theme in some depth and that the purpose of such collections is to distill a large body of knowledge for general readers.

In the spirit of this tradition, I am offering this collection of forty book reviews on the theme of critical consciousness. Paulo Freire argued that critical consciousness was a necessary feature of a liberatory education. By critical consciousness, he meant the ability to recognize the economic, political and social contradictions that create, benefit and maintain an oppressive social order. In his classic

work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in which he describes the pitfalls of ‘banking education,’ Freire suggested that, ‘The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world.’ This critical consciousness, accompanied by social action, was aimed at bringing about freedom and a just social order. However, for Freire critical consciousness was also a necessary step toward becoming more fully human, or rather to emerge our humanity from its submersion in the textbooks and examinations of banking education. Central to this project, Freire insisted, was the concept of ‘culture’ as a starting point for active inquiry. By focusing on culture in the anthropological sense of how people make meaning in the world, Freire was intervening on the conceptual level and this intervention could then inspire learners to begin posing their own questions. Critical consciousness provides the tools through which learners can engage and shape their world.

The books reviewed in this collection should not be seen as providing a manual for developing critical consciousness, nor should they be seen as a definitive list of books on the topics that they address. Instead, I selected books that helped to emerge my own critical consciousness, and that of my students, in twenty years of undergraduate university teaching. Rather than thinking in terms of definitive lists or statements, therefore, I developed this collection as part of what needs to be a larger project of sharing our emerging critical consciousness and humanity reclaiming experiences. This idea has informed my work on the Radical Essentials Pamphlet Series (REPS) published since 2002 by Citizens International, in which I offered reprints of classic examples of critical consciousness, such as those by Freire and Memmi, that contributed to the emergence of the Third World from the yokes of colonialism during the 1960s. In the present collection of book reviews, I have turned my attention to more contemporary economic, social and political problems that could be seen as remnants of the old physical order of colonialism, and which constitute instead a more subtle but ongoing form of intellectual colonialism.

The reviews are arranged alphabetically by book title so that

“... this book will go a long way to convince readers that we must do something, collectively, within our means if we are to shape a better future for the generations that come after us.” — *Dzulkifli Abdul Razak*, Vice-Chancellor, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia

Books For Critical Consciousness 40 Reviews

PAULO FREIRE argued that critical consciousness was a necessary feature of a liberatory education. By critical consciousness, he meant the ability to recognize the economic, political and social contradictions that create, benefit and maintain an oppressive social order. This critical consciousness, accompanied by social action, was aimed at bringing about freedom and a just social order. Critical consciousness provides the tools through which learners can engage and shape their world.

With this collection of book reviews, J. Progler aims to raise critical consciousness about contemporary economic, social and political problems that could be seen as remnants of the old physical order of colonialism, and which constitute instead a more subtle but ongoing form of intellectual colonialism.

The books fall into several categories, including politics, media studies, education and current events. Several of the books are rigorous scholarly treatises rooted in specific academic disciplines, such as anthropology, history and sociology, and written for specialized university students and other academics, while others are intended for more or less popular audiences with an eye toward social activism. There are just as many theoretical as there are practical titles, and there are also a few literary works. Such a blend of outlooks, styles and topics is necessary for developing critical consciousness, in particular for general readers, because each style and topic offers its own way of looking at, analyzing and commenting upon the economic, political and social realities of the world today.

J. Progler is currently Professor of Media, Culture and Society in the College of Asia Pacific Studies at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University in Japan, where he teaches social theory, comparative religion, sociology of education and cultural anthropology, as well as a special lecture on atomic bomb cinema. He is a co-creator of Multiversity, based in Penang and Goa, and edits the *Radical Essentials Pamphlet Series* for Citizens International. His previous book for CI, *Encountering Islam*, was published in 2008, and his next book will be on comparative education, which will be forthcoming in 2012. Progler also contributes media reports to the *Journal of Research in Medical Sciences* based at Isfahan University, Iran.



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