divergent views is to shift the theoretical platform from (structualist) neo-Marxism to pluralism.

Our concern with this text is not with some of the points it makes. In fact, to keep the focus on the last chapter, we heartily agree that historians do need to engage with sociologists to help shape our collective understandings of educational change. And we fully support the argument that "left" educators need to be held accountable on their own terms. We also agree that the main way for historians to facilitate this in relation to recent change in New Zealand (and other western countries) is through a closer scrutiny of "the New Right." But where we depart from neo-liberal history is that we would urge historians to let go of (positivistic) illusions of purity and do this in theoretically informed ways.

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At a time when education in general and teachers in particular are experiencing economic downsizing and strident calls to redefine "the basics," it is a rare treat to read a well-written book about a committed, inspirational teacher. Daniel Murphy has provided us with exactly that in his *Tolstoy and Education,* a study in which he seeks "to fill a lacuna in Tolstoyan scholar-ship" by providing a comprehensive assessment of the great novelist's life and work as an educator. Skillfully interweaving salient passages from the novels with specific educational writings, Murphy provides a rich, evocative account of a fascinating human being. Tolstoy emerges as one who truly sought to live his ideas and whose life and work, as a result, maintained a deep, unflinching integrity. Murphy clearly.cares a great deal about his topic, and if at times the account appears remarkably uncritical, even hagiographic, the wealth of pedagogical wisdom stored in Tolstoy's educational writings soon convinces.

After a brief critical review of some recently published perspectives on Tolstoy's educational beliefs and activities, Murphy commences his study with an overview of education in Tsarist Russia. Then, as now, schools served as arenas in which the opposing principles of equalitarianism and entrenchment were played out. Entrenchment in this case favoured a style of pedagogy characterized by "mechanical instruction, learning through rote memorization, the stifling of individual creativity and strict, regimental styles of discipline."

It was against this background that Tolstoy evolved his essentially "aesthetic pedagogy." We are given a penetrating account of the pedagogical influences in his life and the artistic and religious philosophies that informed and permeated his educational ideals. One of the great strengths of Murphy's book is the rich potential it offers to diverse areas of educational thought. The notion of the teacher as
first and foremost a person is well
drawn here.

Having provided a concise yet
comprehensive sketch of the man and
his time, Murphy proceeds to the main
purpose of his study, a definition and
elucidation of the ruling principles of
Tolstoy’s educational philosophy.
Four thrusts are developed here: the
basic principles of his pedagogy; his
policies on aesthetic education and
specifically on the teaching of reading
and writing, art and music; his policies
on moral and religious education; and
finally, his views on social, com-
unity, and adult education. A chapter is
devoted to each.

Because he espoused so deeply
the importance of individual freedom
in education—the vital recognition of
the individuality of the learner—Tol-
stoy has sometimes been seen as cut
from the same cloth as John Dewey
and A.S. Neill. Reginald D. Archam-
bault in his introduction to Tolstoy on
Education (University of Chicago
Press, 1967), for example, speaks of
his “creating a pedagogy of extreme
permissiveness.” And he concludes
that Tolstoy justifiably could be seen
as a “precursor of A.S. Neill who came
to strikingly similar conclusions to
Tolstoy’s in his experiments at Sum-
nerhill.” Neither is it difficult to un-
derstand how such a view might arise.
Art and artists long have been associ-
ated with a kind of wild, romantic free-
dom, so Tolstoy’s educational ideas,
emanating as they do from a great and
renowned novelist, are easily cast in
such a mold.

Views such as these, says Murphy,
“not only misrepresent the ideals put
forward by Tolstoy in his educational
writings but grossly distort the values
and beliefs on which all of his work
was founded.” In other words, they
misunderstand “art.” Murphy ex-
plains how Tolstoy’s artistic creed al-
lowed him to embrace wholeheartedly
both the values of individual freedom
and tradition without, however, sacri-
ficing one to the fulfilment of the other.
The crucial importance of both of these
notions in the learning experience is
exemplified beautifully in the more de-
tailed sections on Tolstoy’s teaching of
reading and writing, art, and music.
His insistence on the right of access of
every child to great literature is ac-
nowledged, but so also is his equal
insistence that the instructional pro-
cess be rooted in what Paulo Freire a
century later described as the “the-
matic universe” of the learner. Ide-
ologues on either side of the phonics/whole language debate would
do well to study Tolstoy’s approach,
which so tellingly does justice to both
their central contenstions. Modern edu-
cators, struggling with the incommen-
surable claims of conflicting
pedagogic traditions, will also find
much wisdom in Tolstoy’s aestheti-
cally based pedagogy. Finally, artists
will be delighted to see at last the rig-
orous and exacting nature of their art
forms aptly and eloquently acknowl-
dged.

It is in the latter part of the book
that we begin to appreciate that ex-
traordinary sense of coherent purpose
that permeated Tolstoy’s life and work.
Here he is depicted as an educator not
just through his espousing the role of
schoolmaster and educational re-
former, but also through his conceiv-
ing the role of the artist as having a
distinct educational purpose—the revelation of truth, especially religious and moral truth. The potential of an aesthetically based pedagogy to speak to issues in religious education is skilfully drawn. And in the final chapters Tolstoy’s social activism is explored, its ramifications for modern education delineated.

In summary, Murphy has written a very important book about a very important educator, one that is comprehensive, thoroughly researched, and perhaps most important, “a great read.” It has something to offer to almost any area of educational thought.

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