
September 2020

Book review: Media and Moral Education. A Philosophy of Critical Engagement.

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Recommended Citation

Brown, C. L. (2020). Book review: Media and Moral Education. A Philosophy of Critical Engagement.. *Excelsior: Leadership in Teaching and Learning*, 13 (1). <https://doi.org/10.143 05/jn.19440413.202 0.13.1.05> CCBY.

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Book Review: *Media and Moral Education: A Philosophy of Critical Engagement*

Excelsior: Leadership in Teaching and Learning
2020, Vol. 13(1), 80-82
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<https://doi.org/10.14305/jn.19440413.2020.13.1.05>

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Keywords

book review, critical perspectivism, media literacy, community of inquiry, philosophy of education

D'Olimpio, L. (2018). *Media and moral education. A philosophy of critical engagement*. Routledge: Oxon. ISBN: 9780367367961

Media and moral education tackles the topic of how we educate young people to live and learn in a digital world through the adoption of a moral standpoint or point of view. This is a particularly pertinent issue for educators as the digital world is fraught with pitfalls and challenges and in many contexts educators and educational institutions fall short of dealing with the complexities of digital literacy and digital citizenship directly. We have moved beyond the issue of accessibility to information and media, to the need to focus on the ability to seek, analyse and critically evaluate and apply information and media content to purposeful decision-making and choices, particularly in relation to learning (Grizzle and Calvo, 2013). With technology being increasingly ubiquitous and pervasive we need to move our attention beyond the mechanics of access and ability into the implications of living digitally.

D'Olimpio offers an approach that is new to me in the field of e-learning but connects with many of the dilemma's that I face both in the classroom and in my research. As someone who is passionate about educating young people to be able to confidently, critically, and kindly live and learn in a digital world this book offers a valuable theoretical base through the lens of critical perspectivism. This lens can be understood as an ethical attitude applied to processing and understanding information from multiple sources, including the internet. D'Olimpio moves beyond the problems of media literacy and offers an approach to engaging with the digital world critically and

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compassionately. She explores how people, who are immersed in the digital world, can develop both a critical and empathic approach in the online space.

Critical perspectivism provides an attitudinal stance (influenced by ethics of care theorists) to digital literacy. As an approach this involves moving beyond the skills and capabilities of accessing and using information towards an emotional engagement with information that includes compassion and care. This is particularly necessary in the post truth world where we need to develop not only the ability to question and challenge information but also the abilities to judge truth and morality in terms of our own lives and those of others.

In chapters 2 & 3 D'Olimpio unpacks the concepts of compassion and criticality drawing of philosophers and theorists such as Adorno, Carroll and Nussbaum. In doing so she moves beyond the notion of empathy as understanding another person's views and feelings to compassion which adds a component of taking action. In this she includes the need to "seek out, recognise and listen to minority and marginalised voices" (2018, 30).

Chapter 4 reflects on social media and multiliteracies and takes a historical look back at Web 2.0 developments and the current global context. D'Olimpio unpacks the dominant issues of social media to explore the perils and pitfalls like fake news, hoaxes, catfishing and slacktivism and how people can engage with these issues in an ethically responsive manner that is both critical and compassionate. This connects with work on developing media literacy and digital citizenship that others are wrestling with in different global contexts as well (Teschers and Brown 2019).

Since the digital world is a shared space with unlimited power and potential, we need critical engagement in order to shift the discourse towards navigating digital technologies and media for social and public good. Critical perspectivism provides a useful conceptual approach towards doing this that goes beyond a digital literacy focus on access and abilities towards one where attitudes and moral are at the forefront. We need to move beyond a technologically deterministic view of the world and reaffirm principles and values like empathy, compassion, responsibility, fairness and truth telling (Newport, 2019).

D'Olimpio then offers further value to her argument by providing a practical framework and approach for teachers and educators to draw on in order to achieve this goal. Chapter 5 moves into a description of teaching of this complex attitudinal stance. She advocates for a Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach drawing on a Community of Inquiry (CoI) pedagogy. In terms of developing digital media literacy, this approach is more concerned with providing children with abilities and capabilities that they can use in the future than teaching them how to use a computer. P4C is concerned with preparing children for life, through developing critical, creative, collaborative, and caring thinking. Particularly relevant is the unpacking of context, trust and wisdom along with strategies and examples of classroom practice. She provides examples of the CoI pedagogy such as using a "question quadrant" to encourage children to explore concepts through asking questions that critically engage with their own and others' ideas, while compassionately responding to the views of others as they are encountered. This approach foregrounds inclusiveness and focuses on developing a safe environment which fosters a feeling of trust and care where children can see themselves as part of a community of inquirers.

Although D'Olimpio concludes by exploring the role philosophy, as a discipline, can play in developing critical perspectival citizens, I would argue that this book makes a valuable contribution well beyond this discipline and would interest scholars in e-learning, media and communication studies and beyond. Engagingly written and accessible to read I would recommend *Media and Moral Education* to researchers, educators and postgraduate students grappling with what it means live and learn in today's digital world.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for this research.

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