

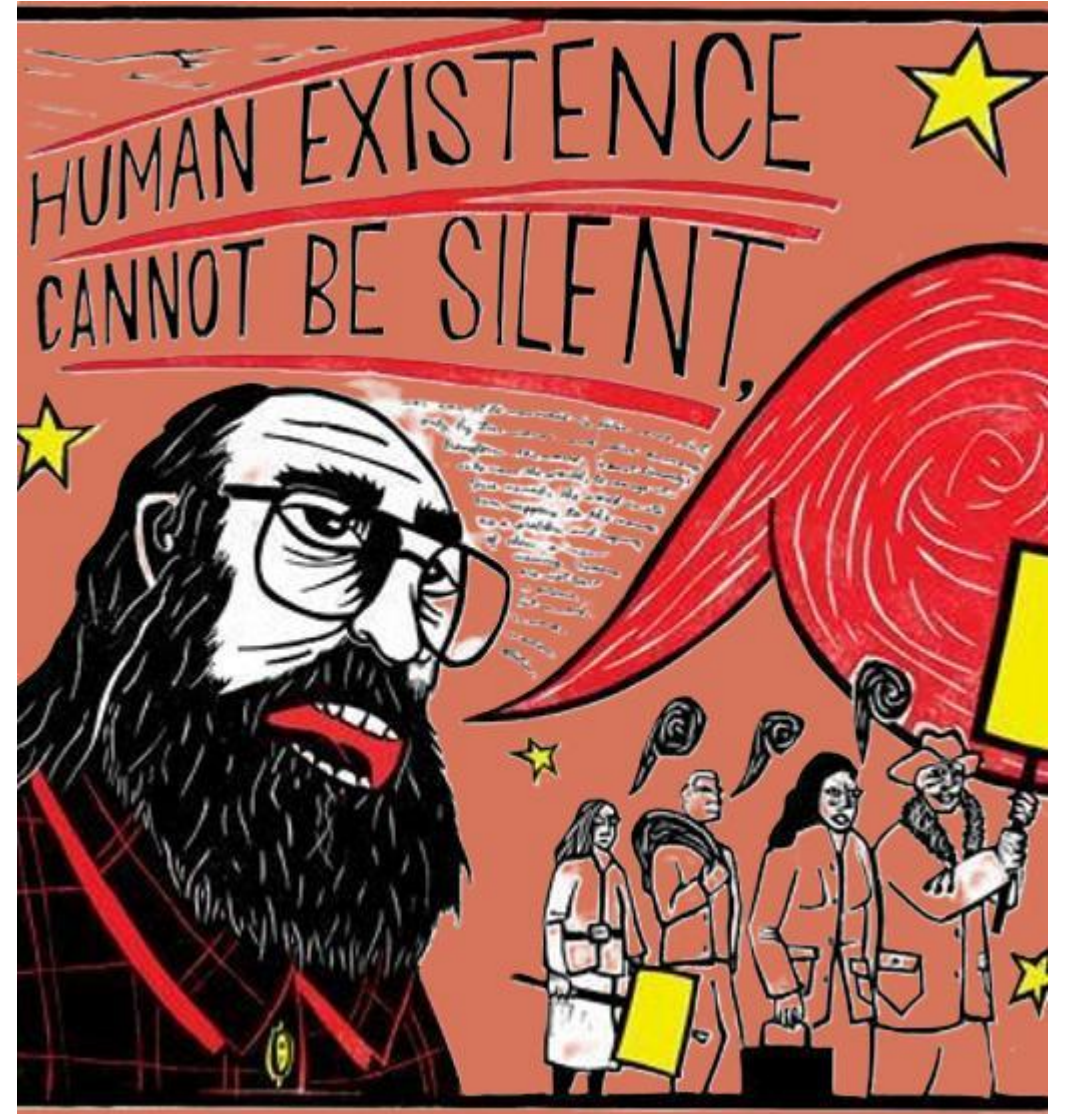
Who has **Voice** in Adult and Lifelong Learning? The Educational **Encounter** in the **Age of AI**

George A. Koulaouzides
Hellenic Open University

Keynote speech

MELLearn

22nd Conference on University Lifelong Learning
June 5, 2026 - Ludovika University of Public Service



Adult learning has long been tied to the emergence of voice:

the voice of **workers** demanding **rights**,
the voice of **women** challenging **exclusion**,
the voice of **migrants** negotiating **belonging**,
the voice of **marginalized communities**
resisting **invisibility**.

In this sense, adult education has never been **politically neutral**.

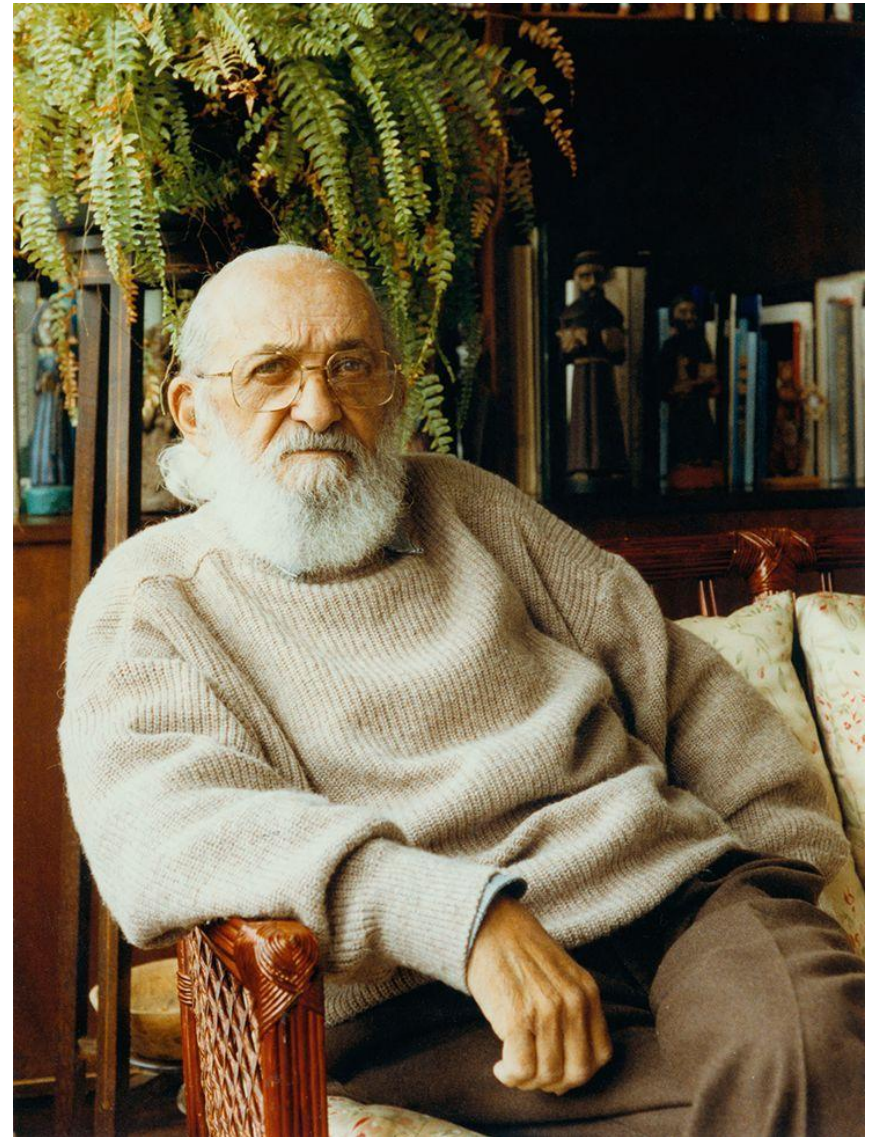
It either reproduces existing relations of power or creates the conditions for their transformation.



This is why Paulo Freire's critique of the "banking model" of education remains profoundly relevant even today. We know well its logic **regardless** of the technology through which it is delivered.

Against this, critical adult educators embrace problem-posing education: learning grounded in dialogue, critical questioning, and collective action.

Dialogue here is understood as process through which individuals examine oppressive assumptions and act toward social change.



But what happens when the educational encounter, the very process of dialogue, is being transformed?

As we all are experiencing in our institutions, learners increasingly move from dialogical human relationships to AI-mediated interaction.

When a learner, drawn by the convenience of AI models, asks a critical question — **whose voice answers?**

Whose interests are embedded in that answer, and what forms of consciousness does it ultimately cultivate?

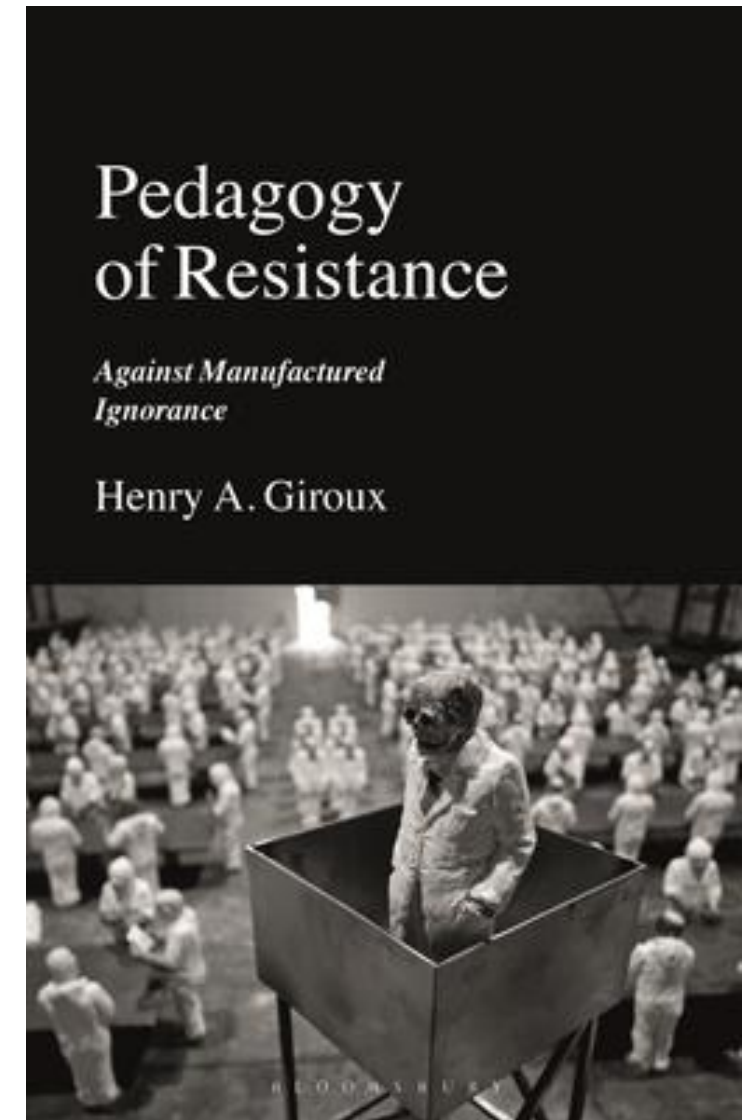
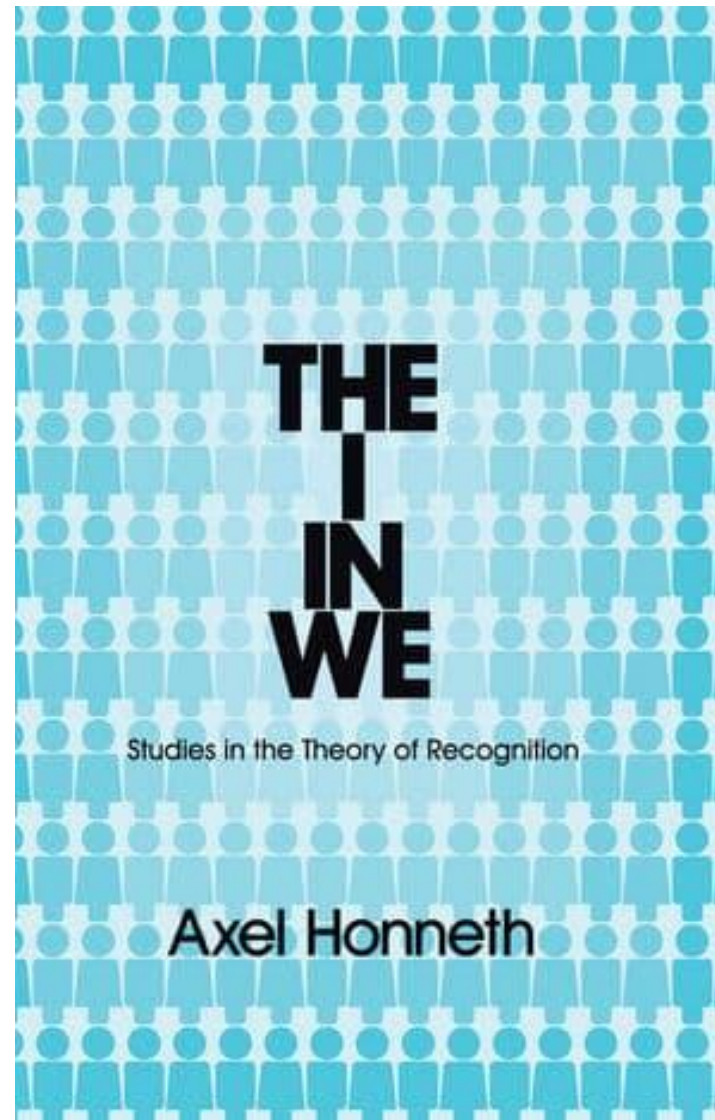


Voice in adult education is more than speaking; In critical pedagogy, voice is linked to resistance and emancipation (**Giroux**) .

Marginalized learners use voice to question inequality. Voice shapes narrative identity and meaning-making from life experience.

Recognition shows that voice requires being heard, valued, and respected by others (**Honneth**) .

True educational voice leads to **recognition, resistance, participation, and social change.**



The educational encounter is **central** in humanistic and critical adult education traditions.

It is not information exchange, but a relational and dialogical event between persons. It is a truthful space grounded in presence, authenticity, and transformation (bell hooks).

Buber's "**I-Thou**" highlights mutual recognition, not objectification ("I-It") in education.

In authentic encounters, learners are seen as whole persons, not objects of instruction.

AI challenges this tradition by introducing non-human "participants" in educational dialogue.

AI may enhance interaction, but risks reducing dialogue to efficient yet non-lived responses.



Examining voice in AI contexts

AI in education is a reconfiguration of voice, participation, and knowledge.

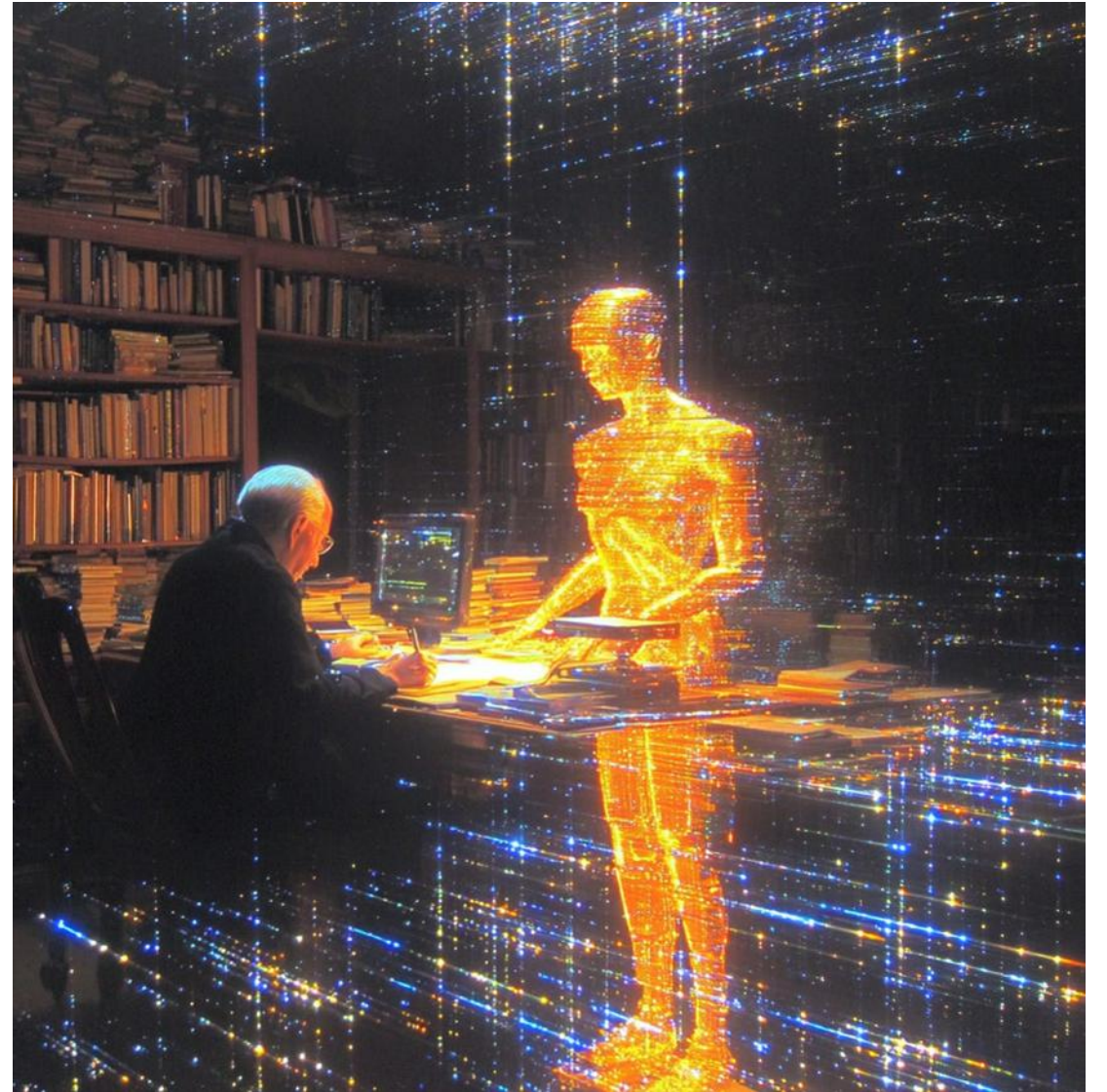
It can support learners and educators in expressing ideas, organizing thought, and joining dialogue. AI may function as a catalyst for inclusion.

Yet AI also shapes what is visible and legitimate as knowledge.

AI can reproduce historical and epistemic inequalities.

This raises the risk of epistemic “colonization” of minority and local ways of knowing.

Increasing reliance on AI blurs the boundary between personal voice and machine-generated language. The danger is distancing learners from their own reflection and meaning-making.



Rethinking our role as adult educators

AI in adult education requires a fundamental rethinking of our role.

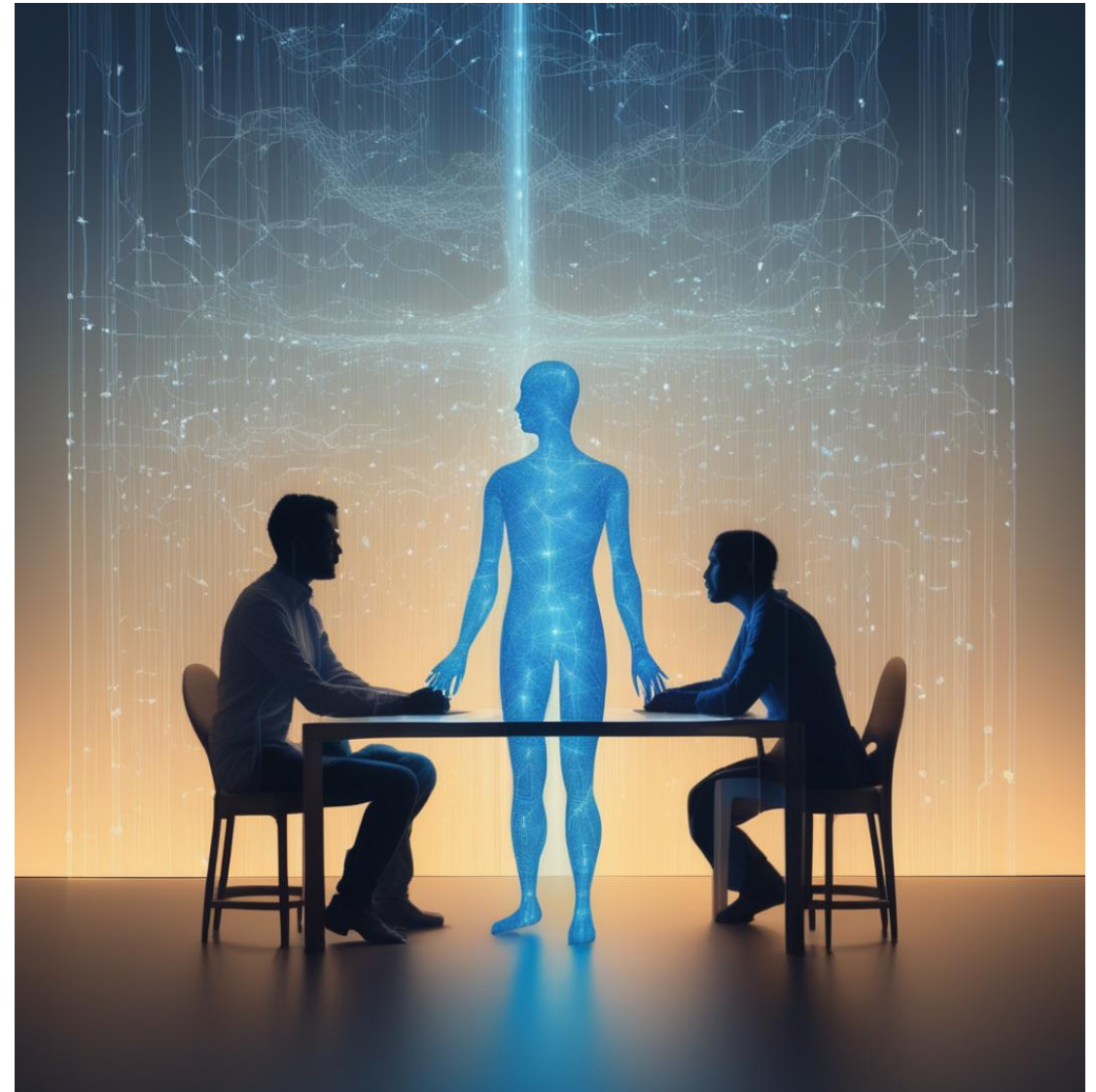
AI provides sophisticated answers, challenging traditional educator authority.

But when AI is shaping dialogue then there is the risk of reducing educators to managers of dialogue rather than active participants in it.

Critical education depends on plurality, which AI systems may flatten through standardization.

Educators may need to act as **“guardians of dialogue”**, protecting marginalized voices.

Our role increasingly becomes safeguarding human dimensions like dialogue and recognition.



The integration of AI in adult education raises important ethical and political questions.

Although AI looks neutral, it reflects the inequalities embedded in its “learning” data.

As a result, issues of representation and power are central to understanding AI in education.

Most large AI systems are shaped by Global North, English-speaking contexts.

Unequal access to digital tools and literacy risks widening existing inequalities and creating a “digital voice divide.”

AI has political implications, as it influences which knowledge is valued and whose voices are heard.



Adult education has traditionally been understood as a dialogical process grounded in voice and mutual presence.

Today, AI enters this relationship as a third participant, creating a triadic educational encounter.

While AI can enhance access and participation it may also standardize communication and weaken relational depth.

The key challenge is not whether AI should be included, but how education responds in ethical and democratic ways.

This requires dialogical integrity, critical AI literacy, and the preservation of human experience as core educational principles.

Ultimately, the future of adult learning depends on whether learners can still recognize and maintain ownership of their own voice.



Thank you for the invitation and
your attention!



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