

11-2014

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Peter McLaren

Chapman University, mclaren@chapman.edu

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Recommended Citation

McLaren, P. (2014). Comrade Jesus: An epistolic manifesto. *Knowledge Cultures*, 2(6), 55-114.

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This article was originally published in *Knowledge Cultures*, volume 2, issue 6, in 2014.

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Knowledge Cultures, 2.6 (Nov. 2014): p55.

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Abstract:

Set against the backdrop of the contemporary crisis of capitalism and world-historical events, this article examines the advance of globalized imperialism from the perspective of a Marxist-humanist approach to pedagogy known as "revolutionary critical pedagogy" enriched by liberation theology. It is written as an epistolic manifesto to the transnational capitalist class, demanding that those who willingly serve its interests reconsider their allegiance and calling for a planetary revolution in the way that we both think about capitalism and how education and religion serves to reproduce it at the peril of both students and humanity as a whole.

Keywords: Jesus; Marxist-humanism; capitalism; revolutionary critical pedagogy; Christian socialism

Full Text:

As critical educators we take pride in our search for meaning, and our metamorphosis of consciousness has taken us along many different paths, to different places, if not in a quest for truth, then at least to purchase a crisper and more perspicuous reality from which to inaugurate a radical reconstruction of society through educational, political and spiritual transformation. What forces are at work to disable our quest are neither apparent nor easily discerned and critical educators have managed to appropriate many different languages with which to navigate the terrain of current educational reform. This essay adopts the language of Marxist humanism, revolutionary critical pedagogy and Christian socialism.

What this essay recriminates in official education is not only its puerile understanding of the meaning and purpose of public knowledge but its hypocrisy in advocating critical thinking--as in the case of the recent educational panacea known as "common core"--while at the same time publically suturing the goals of education to the imperatives of the capitalist marketplace. The idea of the new global citizen--cobbed together from a production line of critically-minded consumers who have been educated to make good purchasing choices--is a squalid concept lost in the quagmire of bad infinity, and will only advance the notion that growth through the expansion of neoliberal capitalism automatically means progress for humanity. Critical pedagogy offers an alternative vision and set of goals for the education of humanity. Critical pedagogy is the lucubration of a whole philosophy of praxis that predates Marx and can be found in Biblical texts. If we wish to break from alienated labor then we must break completely with the logic of capitalist accumulation and profit, and this is something to which Marx and Jesus would agree. Consequently, we covenant our participation in the life history of the world through an endless struggle that constitutes the permanent revolution ahead.

It is no exaggeration to say that public education is under threat of extinction. The uneven but inexorable progress of neoliberal economic policies clearly provided the incubus for transferring

the magisterium of education in its entirety to the business community. The world-producing power of the corporate media has not only helped to create a privatized, discount store version of democracy that is allied with the arrogance and greed of the ruling class, but it has turned the public against itself in its support of privatizing schools. The chiasm of gloom surrounding public schooling that has been fostered by the corporate attack on teachers, teachers unions and those who see the privatization of education as a consolatory fantasy designed to line the pockets of corporate investors by selling hope to aggrieved communities, is not likely to abate anytime soon.

Erudite expositors on why the "what," "how" and "why" of effective teaching understand that it cannot be adequately demonstrated by sets of algorithms spawned in the ideological laboratories of scientific management at the behest of billionaire investors in instrumentalist approaches to test-based accountability. At a time in which exercises in "test prep" have now supplanted the Pledge of Allegiance as the most generic form of patriotism in our nation's schools, critical pedagogy serves as a sword of Damocles, hanging over the head of the nation's educational tribunals and their admentores, ingratiators and sycophants in the business community.

In an age of "advocacy philanthropy," where the business elite and other financial opportunists sit comfortably at the helm of educational policy-making, where advocates for programs supported by funds from the student loan business to increase access to college for students who must borrow heavily to attend are not judged to be enemies of democracy but rather held up as examples of good citizenship, and where the overall agenda of educational reform is to establish alternatives to public education at public expense, we shudder at just how retrograde public education has become in their hands.

Of we could play education like a fiddler, more specifically like a fiddler from the Appalachian highlands of Virginia, who uses the technique of double stopping (in which two strings are played by the bow at the same time with one string serving as the drone string) then education would represent this drone string that is never noted but always heard. The fiddler plays melodies on the other strings but the drone never changes. Mainstream reformers bedazzle the public with all kinds of melodies that do nothing to effect the drone strings, while revolutionaries want to change the way the instrument is played.

All of us indignantly reject social inequality as a major impediment to our goals of reforming the state through education, but many of us have chosen to follow a path that takes the struggle against inequality further than simply denouncing the peremptory mandates of austerity capitalism. My own goal has to use education to create critically-minded citizens willing and able to consider alternatives to capitalist value production. One of the major obstacles has been imputing to socialism false maxims that we socialists "hate America" and attributing to us irreformably demonic characteristics--contemporary spin-offs that we are "reds" hiding under America's "beds." One of the key problems here, of course, is the confusion of capitalism with market anarchy and socialism with planned production by a centralized state. The bulk of social wealth is consumed not by people but by capital itself. The answer is not to be found in exchange relations in the market but rather the domination of dead over living labor. The inability of capitalism to reproduce its only value-creating substance--labor power--means that capitalism can be defeated. We need a philosophically grounded alternative to capitalism (Hudis, 2012).

The inexorable reprobation to which socialists have been subjected and their execration by the public-at-large has less to do with a willful ignorance than with a terrifyingly motivated ignorance created through the decades by the corporate media, a learned ignorance that Chomsky famously coined as "manufacturing consent." This has led over time to an instinctive repugnance toward socialism and a knee-jerk anti-Marxism. The culpable absence of the public in looking beyond capitalism can be ascribed to many factors, but in particular to a willful amnesia about the history of class struggle in the United States, to an unscrupulous crusade against welfare and social programs carried out by both Republicans and Democrats, and to a celebratory adherence to official doctrinal propaganda that claims that capitalism might be flawed but it is the only viable alternative for economic prosperity and democracy. The idea of a socialist alternative to capitalism is not an idea that needs to be immediately amenable to scientific investigation. Suffice that for the purposes of this article, I view it as moral exhortation--a categorical imperative, if you will--that some other sustainable form of organization has to be adopted in order for the planet to survive and human and non-human life along with it.

Clearly, this is a pivotal moment for humanity, when the meanings, values and norms of everyday life are arching towards oblivion, following in the debris-strewn wake of Benjamin's Angel of History; when human beings are being distributed unevenly across the planet as little more than property relations, as "surplus populations;" when a culture of slave labor is increasingly defining the workaday world of American cities; when capital's structurally instantiated ability to supervise our labor, control our investments and purchase our labor power has reached new levels of opprobrium; when those who are habitually relegated to subordinate positions within capital's structured hierarchies live in constant fear of joblessness and hunger; and when the masses of humanity are in peril of being crushed by the hobnailed boots of Stormtrooper Capitalism. The winds of critical consciousness, enervated by outrage at the profligate use of lies and deceptions by the capitalist class--a class that gorgonzolas the public through a winner-takes-all market fundamentalism and corporate-driven media spectacles--are stirring up the toxic debris from our austerity-gripped and broken humanity. Wearing the nationalist armor of settler-colonial societies, capitalism subordinates human beings to things, splitting human beings off from themselves, slicing them into pieces of the American Dream with the nonchalant dexterity of the Iron Chef wielding an eight-inch Honbazuka-processed knife.

Greg Palast has exposed what he calls the "End Game Memo" which signaled part of the plan created by the top US Treasury officials to conspire "with a small cabal of banker big-shots to rip apart financial regulation across the planet." In the late 1990s, the US Treasury Secretary, Robert Rubin, and Deputy Treasury Secretary, Larry Summers, were frenetically pushing to deregulate banks, and they joined forces with some of the most powerful CEOs on the planet to make sure that this was accomplished. The "end game" was tricky and seemed indomitable because it required the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act to dismantle the barrier between commercial banks and investment banks. Palast describes it as "replacing bank vaults with roulette wheels." The banks wanted to venture into the high-risk game of "derivatives trading" which allowed banks to carry trillions of dollars of pseudo-securities on their books as "assets." But the transformation of US banks into "derivatives casinos" would be hampered if money fled US shores to nations with safer banking laws.

So this small cabal of banksters decided--and were successful--at eliminating controls on banks in every nation on the planet--in a single cunning stroke by using the Financial Services Agreement (or FSA). The FSA was an addendum to the international trade agreements policed by the World Trade Organization that was utilized by the banksters to force countries to deal with trade in "toxic" assets such as financial derivatives. Every nation was thus pushed to open their markets to Citibank, JP Morgan and their derivatives "products." All 156 nations in the World Trade Organization were pressured to remove their own Glass-Steagall divisions between commercial savings banks and the investment banks that gamble with derivatives. All nations were bribed or forced in other ways to comply and only Brazil refused to play the game. Of course, as Palast notes, the game destroyed countries like Greece, Ecuador and Argentina, just to name a few, and contributed catastrophically to the global financial crisis of 2008.

Capitalism turns living and breathing bodies into things, ensepulchuring humanity in a vault of silence, engulfing it in a bright darkness, and transforming it into the living dead through the occult process of commodity production. Capitalism is little more than valorized abstractions, a world-producing monster adept at misplacing the abstract for the concrete, at reducing relational being to the form of appearance of socially average labor time, and destroying the concrete relationality of nature by misplacing the concreteness of all processive being (Pomeroy, 2004a). Capitalism therefore entails a loss of subjective and inter-subjective meaning (Hudis, 2014a). Correlative to a capitalist economy is an unconscious schema of rational calculation governing an erotically exuberant pursuit of knowledge, which involves a possessive mastery over commodities, a squandering of human nature, abstracting from the wholeness of human beings and thus turning them into fragments of each other, creating the impersonal, quantifying and utilitarian rationality and alienated consciousness of homo economicus.

We confront ourselves as people who have ownership of the means to purchase wealth (the ideologists and apologists of the bourgeoisie) against those who must sell their labor-power to those who do not possess such ownership (the working-class). We are trapped in the economic bowels of neoliberal capitalism whose closed and putrefied futures are visible in the pockmarked cultural skin of our consumer culture. Thousands of Miley Cyrus addicts whose lives turn on her accidentally on purpose wardrobe malfunctions and her high-cut leotards can still view themselves as cultural subversives after being declared redundant in their local Costco job and lining up for lunch in their neighborhood soup kitchen where they can share Miley's psychedelic instagrams.

Amidst the turmoil and conflagration of the current historical moment, capitalism keeps a steady hand with the flippant arrogance of the most famous smirking apologist of US imperialism, William F. Buckley, his Yale-educated tongue wagging jauntily from the pillow-feathered clouds of his heavenly perch as he adroitly deploys his clipboard-prop gently upon his succulent lap, otherwise reserved for his King Charles spaniels. There seems to be nothing standing in the way of capitalism's continuation, save a few irritants in the alternative media that are flippantly swatted away from time to time, like flies on the arse of a barnyard goat. Today's unrelenting urgency of redeeming life from the belligerent forces of social reproduction--the internally differentiated expanding whole of value production, inside of which is coiled the incubus of misplaced concreteness--marks a watershed in the history of this planet.

The paradigmatic innovation of anti-colonial analysis in North America has been significantly impacted by what has been taking place since capital began responding to the crisis of the 1970s of Fordist-Keynesian capitalism --which William Robinson (1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2011a, b) has characterized as capital's ferocious quest to break free of nation-state constraints to accumulation and twentieth-century regulated capital (labor relations based on some [at least a few] reciprocal commitments and rights)--a move which has seen the development of a new transnational model of accumulation in which transnational fractions of capital have become dominant. New mechanisms of accumulation, as Robinson notes, include a cheapening of labor and the growth of flexible, deregulated and de-unionized labor, where women always experience super-exploitation in relation to men; the dramatic expansion of capital itself; the creation of a global and regulatory structure to facilitate the emerging global circuits of accumulation; and, finally, neoliberal structural adjustment programs which seek to create the conditions for unfettered operations of emerging transnational capital across borders and between countries.

In my work with teachers, education scholars, political activists and revolutionaries worldwide, I've repeatedly visited mean and lonely streets that span numerous counties, countries and continents. Whether I've been visiting the Roma district of Budapest, the barrios on the outskirts of Medellin, the cartel-controlled neighborhoods of Morelia or Juarez, the favelas of Rio or Sao Paulo, the crowded alleys of Delhi, the alleyways of Harbin (near the Siberian border), or the streets of South Central Los Angeles, I've encountered pain and despair among the many as a result of the exploitation by the few. Whether I've been speaking to hitchhikers caught in a snowstorm, Vietnam vets in overflowing homeless shelters, elderly workers in emergency warming centers whose food stamps had just been cut by Republican legislation, jobless men and women resting on pillows of sewer steam wafting through the cast iron grates of litter-strewn streets, a group of teenagers hanging out in strip malls festooned with faded pockmarked signs offering discount malt liquor, or day laborers crowded around hole-in-the-walls offering cheap pizza, I hear the same voices of desperation and resignation. Even in such concrete situations that reek of economic catastrophism, I would like to stress the importance of philosophy. That is, class struggle as cultivating a philosophy of praxis. Without such a struggle we will remain blank-faced and sullen, immobilized for all eternity like the death's-heads carved on gravestones by Ebenezer Soule of Plympton Massachusetts in the 1750s.

On a recent visit to the Universidad Autonoma de Chiapas and the Escuela Normal Rural Mactumactza in Tuxtla, Chiapas, I passed through San Juan Chamula and Zinacantan and stopped for several days at San Cristobal de las Casas to meet some environmental educators from the government. On a lonely street of San Cristobal an old man with fire opal eyes, a straw hat, and a Zapatista bandana passed me and our shoulders almost touched. His eyes were fixed for a moment on the wall across the street. Emblazoned on the wall were the words, "nos falta 43" (we lack 43) in reference to the 43 escuela normal students from the Raul Isidro Burgos Rural Teachers' College of Ayotzinapa in Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico who were captured, tortured and executed and whose bodies have yet to be recovered. The old man's face was world-weary and I watched him walk haltingly into the distance while I paused for a few minutes to contemplate the words that had been hastily sprayed on the wall. How many people in the United States, even well-intentioned and caring people, would acknowledge in the face of hard evidence, that their comfortable lifestyle is, in part, at the expense of the exploitation not only of Mexico but America Latina.

While authors such as Thomas Piketty--especially his far-famed book, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*--have brought international attention to the exponential and inglorious growth of inequality associated with global capitalism today--we need to be careful about making too much of the very popular and trenchant metaphor of the 1% (the elite capitalist class and its comprador affiliates) versus the 99% of the rest of us (the exploited class). For Piketty, today's "patrimonial capitalism" dominated by rentier wealth and a financial and political oligarchy of CEOs and financiers has ushered in a new gilded age whose upward concentration of wealth poses a grave threat to democracy (Krugman, 2014). While I agree with him on this, it is important to emphasize that Piketty understands capital more from the perspective of the conceits of bourgeois or neoclassical economics than from Marxist economics, that is, from the perspective of ownership and exchange such as assets tied to market prices that capture a return on output such as real estate, rents, profits, dividends, etc. (Andrews, 2014). His focus is on the capital/income ratio and the valuation placed on financial assets, and the distribution of financial resources in rich countries. Piketty admitted that he has never read Marx's *Capital* and he conflates material or personal wealth with capital. He therefore can't answer the question of where the additional money comes from that makes it possible to accumulate capital in Marx's general formula of capital as self-expanding value articulated by Marx as M-C-M. As Hudis (2014a) points out, Marx argued that "money increases in value only if it is invested in commodities whose production entails the employment of labor power whose value is greater than the amount of value that goes to the worker." Money accrues in value only because of the exploitation of labor. In Hudis's (2014a) words, Marx is able to understand the "distorted and alienated character of human relations at the innermost recesses of society, at the point of production." Thus, it is no surprise that Piketty ignores Marx's labor theory of value where commodities function as capital. Labor (concrete and abstract) and surplus value are not examined as obtaining in relations of exploitation and accumulation (Andrews, 2014; see Harvey, 2014). He ignores the findings of Marxist economics (the impossibility of full employment, incessant class struggle, recurring crises or slumps, the inevitability of impoverishment and precarious employment as the victories following classbased political activism and government-provided benefits won through social struggles are inevitably rolled back) built on the authority given to the capitalists to extract surplus value from the worker (see Despain, 2014; Andrews, 2014; Tengely-Evans, 2014).

While Piketty importantly emphasizes economic reforms associated with the social state such as an increase in the minimum wage, reducing the age requirement for Medicare, greater taxes on the rich and support for unions, he clearly believes that democracy must be paired with capitalism, as do most social democrats. That poses a problem for those of us who are searching for a democratic alternative to capitalism. Piketty's book is important in drawing attention to the inexorable economic polarization occurring in countries worldwide and for its call for narrowing income differentials in countries such as the United States where the moneyed disproportionately live (the United States has become more unequal than many emerging countries such as China and India). But my worry is that an overweening concern over inequality can distract us from the misery experienced by masses of people at this particular historical juncture who, as the victims of structural forms of capitalist genocide, cannot find work or feed their families. We need to fight against rising inequality but we also need to first and foremost understand the causes of capitalist exploitation and immiseration. The notion of the 99% can be misleading too, since an unmarried person with an income of \$366,622 in 2011 was part of the 99% (Kliman, 2013).

There are great disparities in that group. And furthermore, the cause of the crisis of capitalism is more complicated than simply the upward redistribution of income. In fact, a downward redistribution of income that takes away the profit from capitalists will also help to destabilize the system (Kliman, 2013). Most critics of capitalism that manage to get into the mainstream debates refrain from an unqualified condemnation of free markets themselves and instead denounce the un mourned cupidity associated with a robber baron mentality that they believe has been resurrected by finance capitalism, winner-take-all markets, family dynasties and supersalaries and lies at the core of our present and persistent problems with economic inequality and disparity. I have no problem with emphasizing the social responsibility of governments and organizations that have become increasingly self-aggressive and ethically indolent in today's digital economy but I want to emphasize the structural violence of capitalist inequality and the necessity of creating a socialist alternative to capitalism's impending form of outlawry in our increasingly disjointed and dissolute world. We will arrive at a socialist alternative through class struggle. And I want to make the arguments, made by others in the international Marxist-humanist initiative, that class struggle needs to be incorporated into a philosophy of praxis, that is, a concretization of philosophy that confronts, rather than excludes, the dialectic. Dialectical philosophy can help us undress capitalist ideology, that is, it can help us unpack our uncritical acceptance of social forms that bind us to the social relations of capitalist exploitation in our anticipation of a liberated future. The founder of Marxist Humanism, Raya Dunayevskaya, maintained that the task of Marxists is not to "abolish" philosophy, but rather "to abolish the conditions preventing the 'realization' of Marx's philosophy, i.e., the reunification of mental and manual abilities in the individual himself, the 'all-rounded' individual who is the body and soul of Marx's humanism" (p. 76).

The ideological imperatives unleashed by organizations such as the Council on Foreign Relations, the Bilderberg Group, the Trilateral Commission, the National Program Office, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the National Security Organization, and their Faustian counterparts in the banking industry, help to establish the framework in which citizenship and patriotism are alloyed; these Stygian imperatives epitomize imperial power and the quest for world cultural domination, and are designed to root out apologists for socialism. Nearly three decades ago, Robert Higgs (1987) cautioned that the USA was becoming a participatory fascist state. Today, Nafeez Ahmen (2013) ominously warns that the Pentagon is currently preparing for massive social unrest over climate change and energy shocks; Ahmen (2014) reports disturbing instances in which US military agencies are supervising and funding investigations by universities into "tipping points for large-scale civil unrest across the world" in order to supply these agencies with "warfighter-relevant insights." As one example, the US Department of Defense through its Minerva Research Initiative has partnered with Cornell University to study "social movement mobilizations and contagions." In this research scenario, non-violent activists are considered national security threats, equated with supporters of political violence and described as "social contagions." Social science is being militarized in the service of war, and social scientists are being conscripted into their patriotic duty of counteracting grassroots protest movements in the interest of the national security state. There is now a proliferation of domestic surveillance operations against political activists, particularly those linked to environmental and social justice protest groups, such as Greenpeace and anti-fracking activists, as strategic partnerships have been created between the FBI, the

Department of Homeland Security, the private sector and the academy to create a "corporate security community" protecting the interests of Wall Street and corporate America.

A fresh new breed of postmodern rebels festooned with brand-name-theory knock-offs and thrift-shop identity politics now exercise their fashionable apostasy in the new techno-mediated social factories known as universities. They are very much present in our graduate education programs through their postmodern theorizing of identity, which hinges on the linkage of identity-formation and the creation of a discount store version of democracy as a mixture of meritocracy and the American Dream. Rather than challenging the marriage of the university and the capitalist class or fighting for the emancipation of the oppressed worldwide through pedagogies of liberation that have a transnational reach, class antagonisms are universally normalized through the performative pettifoggery, the aerosol spray sophistry, the pseudo-profundities, the convulsions and casuistries of political disengagement and the vertigo-inducing terminology that has distinguished these disquieting hellions of the lecture hall over the past few decades--not to mention their dismissal of class struggle in favor of questions of ethnicity, race, gender and sexuality. Furthermore, these knavish coffee house philosophers and suave prodigies of subversive criticality and analytic subterfuge equipped with air conditioned imperatives to discredit all enlightenment metanarratives such as Marxism and to demarcate critical introspection as a prison house of language games fail to identify as self-deception their own participation in language games. This domestication of the economic and divine activation of the cultural has led to the exfoliation of some of the most verdant contributions of socialist pedagogy during these decades. From this vantage point, postmodernism appears to be an ideology of the prosperous, "which itself is a product of the type of capitalism that arose in the imperialist core of contemporary capitalism during the 'Golden Age of Capitalism' between 1945 and 1973" (Ahmad, 2011, p. 16). If, even during these years of prosperity, creating a democracy embrasive of economic equality in the USA was about as realistic as Astroland's Burger Man seizing the controls on the rocket ship that sat atop Gregory and Paul's Hamburgers on Coney Island, and orbiting it around the Statue of Liberty, then economic equality through education today is about as realistic as the National Rifle Association calling for a ban on assault weapons, or McDonalds eliminating the Big Mac. Much of the self-styled brigandage exercised by these postmodern outlaws involves turning away from the cultural and claiming to be materialists. But this so-called productive materialism grounded in immanence equates the material with the "thing-ness" of signs, symbols, discourses, values--part of the cultural "real"--rather than with how the mode of production of material life and social being determines consciousness. Teresa Ebert (2009) sees this move as a return to 18th century matterism that stipulates experience as the limit of what can be known.

Never part of the cloth-cap crowd of workers, these ex-radicals, keen for the latest theoretical divertissement, are adept at giving encouragement to their students and peers for "dissent" through terse but pregnant commentaries about the corporate assault on higher education but such impious outlawry on the part of the opposition is more bluster and bloviation than substance. Aware of the ever-darkening menace consisting of industrial scale torture and brutality that has arrived on the doorsteps of the nation, these radicals stop short of examining how capitalism is implicated in such brutality, preferring instead to offer courses on images of costermongers, high steel workers or Rembrandt's spectacle-pedlar.

We have always had liberal centrists and conservatives who believe that education should be politically neutral. We also have liberal and left-liberals who have given up on class struggle as an engine for social transformation. Motivated by a fear that their left-leaning views might scupper their careers should they go on to upset or challenge the propriety of the academy or the benighted academic clergy or sacerdotal aristocracy who run the universities, many scholars and researchers in the academy choose to moot their personal opinions with the utmost discretion and circumspection while still trying to appear radical-chic. Hence, they are extremely cautious not to offend inadvertently those whose religious or political views have lain fallow and unchallenged for generations and who hold positions of power within the university establishment.

Erstwhile radicals once sympathetic to Marx but who became disillusioned and disgusted by revelations about the Gulag, and traumatized by the failure of "really existing socialism" worried that they would be condemned as dusty dilettantes still clinging to the paltry spirit of socialism (or worse, traduced as Stalinists). They decided instead to ride the new wave of postmodern social theory that embraced a linguistic turn and managed in turn to find comfortable abodes in literature and cultural studies departments. Positioning themselves thus enabled them both to smite the gross profligacy of the capitalist class and its command structure comprised of greedy corporatists and bankers with self-aggrandizing tirades and at the same time put paid to their academic critics by adopting a more digestible "deconstruction." This was a deft academic move that allowed them to assume a political agenda through a stringent labyrinth of explanations yet without dragging research and scholarship away from the compromise of incremental reformism. Here, the institutional framework informed by neoliberal assumptions is already pre-judged as the only rational framework for a society bent on justice, and unwittingly supported by a postmodern embrace of playfulness and the undecidability of the sign.

Reveling in the sagacity of cultural criticism and eager to keep their gladiatorial attitude in tact without suffering an unsettling cost for their radicalism, these prodigies of cosmopolitan learning embraced an unutterably reactionary "anti-foundationalism" that condemns all "master narratives" of progress. Marx would occasionally find a polemical way into some of the debates but was mostly banished from serious consideration. And while the work of Marx is a bit more fashionable these days, with the current crisis of neoliberal capitalism, the postmodernists have to a large extent fallen into tacit agreement with their modernist adversaries and pushed themselves into self-limiting alliances with liberals. By leaving the challenge to capitalism untouched their politics eventually and unwittingly colludes with those whom they despise.

In the arena of educational reform, these defanged revolutionaries abraid the cause of their more militant colleagues often with self-serving maunderings and sententious commentary about educational reform that are mere coinages of the general currency used in mainstream educational debates, never challenging the primacy of capital. Here we need to recall the storied comment by Benjamin (1936) that those who call for a purely cultural or spiritual revolution without changing asymmetrical relations of power and privilege linked to class antagonisms can only be served by the logic of fascism and authoritarian political movements.

And then there are the Marxists who attempt to descry the positivity en-sepulchered within the negativity of Hegel's absolutes but who are shunned for their embrace of a dialectics of

transcendence (transcendence could lead to the Gulag again, it is much safer to remain in a politics of immanence). This Marxist-humanist position that emphasizes transcendence holds that we are the flesh-and-blood idea of capital, waxed fat from our complicity in advancing class society and in doing so enabling millions to be exiled into Marx's reserve army of workers (the unemployed). Thus we need to break out of the social universe of value production by creating a democratic alternative.

My agnostic relationship to liberal modernity with its emphasis on the apolitical drama of personal development while crucifying class struggle on the altar of culture such that the politics of "representation" is substituted for a politics of "revolution," does not mean that I rely on some ghostly psycho-pomp for advice; rather, I ascribe to the concept of praxis (an ordered chaos or irrational regularity) without retreating into the hinterlands of metaphysics and in doing so express critical pedagogy in germinal form as a philosophy of praxis, steering a path between the Scylla of an intractable rationalism and the Charybdis of metaphysical ravings.

The aggrieved, the oppressed and the immiserated, who have subordinated themselves to existing social systems practicing a developmental terrorism, are awakening fitfully from their social amnesia and reminding those who choose to delay their hypnopompic state that, in standing idle, they risk being suffocated by their own past. The window of opportunity is growing smaller for protecting the world against the ghastly panorama of increasing mega-droughts, global warming, ozone depletion, marine and tropical forest habitat destruction, the ongoing and methodological destruction of the biosphere, pandemics, mass extinctions (including the possibility of human extinction), and a possible 1000-year period of unchecked warming, which has been referred to as the "Venus effect," where all possibilities for life on earth will be utterly destroyed. Thus, the clarion call of First Nations peoples worldwide: "Idle No More!"

The annihilation of humanity that capitalism prosecutes with such an illustrious savagery is not some ramped-up bit of catastrophism, but the foundation of civilization's unfinished obelisk, against which we can only smash our heads in horror and disbelief. The chilling realization is that eco-apocalypse is not just some fodder for science fiction movie fans who revel in dystopian plots, but the future anterior of world history that is upon us. Under the guise of responsible job-producing growth ("jobs for the jobless"), we have an infestation of eco-fascisms, whose distracting sheen belies the horrors lurking underneath the surface. Preoccupied with the beautiful translucent hues of a soap bubble catching the noonday sun as it floats aimlessly down a seaside boardwalk, courtesy of a bulbous-nosed local clown, we fail to notice the fish floating upside down amidst the rank and stink of the nearby ocean sewage. As our biosphere goes, so goes the public sphere, including public schooling, with its mania for high-stakes testing, accountability, total quality management and a blind passion for privatization (which usually begins with private-public partnerships), effectively dismantling a public education system that it took 200 years to build.

The enthronement of the bourgeois political order has seen the transnational capitalist class power elite become fully ensconced in what Gramsci called the "integral state" (see Mayo, 1999, 2005; Thomas, 2009). While functionally entombed in their propertarian and liberal democratic values, the bourgeoisie are becoming historically deformed. Samir Amin (2010) warns us about changes in the structures of the governing classes ("bourgeoisies"), political practice, ideology

and political culture. He argues that the "historical bourgeoisie is disappearing from the scene and is now being replaced by the plutocracy of the 'bosses' of oligopolies" (Amin, 2010).

Capitalism is more than the sheet anchor of institutionalized avarice and greed, more than excrement splattered on the coat-tails of perfumed bankers and well-heeled speculators--it is a "world-eater" with an insatiable appetite. Capital has strapped us to the slaughter bench of history, from which we must pry ourselves free to continue our work of class and cultural struggle, creating working-class solidarity, an integral value system and internal class logic capable of countering the hegemony of the bourgeoisie, while at the same time increasing class consensus and popular support. Inherent in capitalist societies marked by perpetual class warfare and the capitalist mode of production is structural violence of a scale so staggering that it can only be conceived as structural genocide. Garry Leech (2012) has argued convincingly and with a savage aplomb that capitalist-induced violence is structural in nature and, indeed, constitutes genocide.

Some critics dismissively opine that liberal capitalist regimes such as the USA cannot become truly fascist. I disagree. Economics is now the dominant science of human behavior and is providing the rationale for merging together sections of government, the military-industrial complex and corporations, creating zealots whose main prerogative is to bolster unrestricted and unilateral authority for the USA on the world stage and to command obedience and loyalty to the US imperium. We have arrived benightedly at the twilight of democracy, the end of freedom's long and slippery road. Yet our leaders instruct our balaclava-clad protesters to decamp from the streets and make their case for economic reform with appeals to politicians and policy works for reason and good faith. However, appealing to the humanity of transnational corporate oligarchs will be about as successful in ending the crisis of inequality faced by the majority of human beings on the planet as trying to put out all the fires in hell with a bucket of lustral water from the aspersorium of the local Catholic church.

In my adoptive homeland today, we have the greatest amount of consumer debt in the world, staggeringly high rates of both child and adult poverty, skyrocketing unemployment, and with the exception of North Korea, more people in prison than anywhere in the world in proportion to our population size, and have all but sacrificed our civic sovereignty. The chief executive officer of our Wal-Mart stores, Michael Duke, makes US\$16,826.92 an hour whereas new employees making \$8.75 an hour gross \$13,650 a year (Gomstyn, 2010). Our infrastructure is crumbling and we continue to fight undeclared wars. Wages for workers in the USA are at their lowest level since the 1930s. Even so, massive cuts are being implemented at every level of government, justified by the claim that "there is no money" for health care, education or other basic social needs. The wealth of the ruling class at this crisis-ridden historical juncture is almost entirely divorced from productive activity in the real economy through a process of financialization, in which the productive forces of the economy are steadily undermined. As I wrote several years ago:

We know now that the financial crisis created the great recession, which then resulted in the fiscal crisis. Massive layoffs and unemployment followed the financial crisis ... [A]s inflated profits on fictitious capital dry up after the implosion of a speculative bubble, capitalism must reduce the amount of variable capital relative to constant capital to restore profitability. Costs

associated with providing public services go up as workers get laid off and tax revenues decline. The government uses taxpayer dollars to bail out those financial institutions that helped to create the financial crisis while those workers suffering most from the crisis are told that they are consuming too much and must be punished even further through austerity programs. The relative amount of value that goes to workers must be cut so that the succulent capitalist class can once again retool its digestive tract for devouring the profits of speculative capital. Voters are told that debt levels threaten their economic well-being, so out of fear they agree to cutbacks in government spending and this is how capital manages to redistribute value from labor to capital--forcing the poor to pay for the rising debt levels afflicting global capital.

Demanding that the rich or the financial institutions pay for the crisis is not the real answer, either, because, as [Peter] Hudis (2010) notes, the relative proportion of value going to capital as against labor must be increased to guarantee that capital accumulation is sustained, and this is true even though 80% of the economic growth in the United States over the past 20 years has ended up in the hands of the wealthiest 5% of the population. Hudis (2010) warns us not to be misled by conceiving of social wealth as reducible to the revenue paid out to workers on one hand and capitalists on the other. This is because most of the value produced in capitalism is not consumed by the capitalists or the workers, but by capital itself.

When the left demands that wealth be distributed to the poor, this only intensifies the crisis of capital, so long as the capitalist law of value is not challenged ... We need to uproot the very law of value itself. But to do that, we must create a viable conception of social organization that can replace capitalist value production. The left has failed to do this and it is up to us now to take up the challenge. (McLaren, 2011, pp. 373-374)

The hyperbolic rhetoric of the fascist imaginary spawned by the recent 2008 recession is likely to be especially acute in the churches and communities affiliated with conservative groups who want a return to the economic practices that were responsible for the very crisis they are now railing against, but who are now, of course, blaming it on bank bailouts, immigration and the deficit. Fascist ideology is not something that burrows its way deep inside the structural unconscious of the USA from the outside, past the gatekeepers of our everyday psyche; it is a constitutive outgrowth of the logic of capital in crisis that can be symptomatically read through a neo-liberal individualism enabled by a normative, value-free absolutism and a neo-feudal/authoritarian pattern of social interaction. The USA has managed to conjure for itself mainly through its military might and the broad spectacle of human slaughter made possible by powerful media apparatuses whose stock-in-trade includes portraying the USA as a democracy under siege by evil forces that are "jealous" of its freedoms--a way to justify and sanctify their frustrations and hatreds, and reconstitute American exceptionalism amidst the rampant violence, prolonged social instability, drug abuse and breakdown of the US family. Of course, all of this works in concert with the thunderous call of Christian evangelicals to repent and heed God's prophets, and to welcome the fact that the USA has been anointed as the apotheosis of divine violence. Plain-spoken declarations abound, dripping with apocalyptic grandiosity, for dismantling the barriers of church and state, and creating a global Christian empire. This should not sound unusual for a country in which rule by violence was the inaugurating law, and which has, through the century, marked its citizenry indelibly in their interactions with others.

The conditions of inequality--stubbornly rationalized by the ruling class through the ideological state apparatus of schooling, religion and the media beguile the people with everyday distractions and falsehoods, mystifying them with respect to their aspirations, loyalties and purposes. As new forms of development of the productive forces arise, existing economic relationships become a burden to the new economic system of production and, as a result of capital's internal conflict, society reorganizes itself to accommodate these new relationships as the ruling class increases their legal and political demands (Pozo, 2003; McLaren, 2005). These central commissars of knowledge production, these sentinels of common sense, cannot abjure the powers of the working class to resist their immiseration by simply wishing them away (Hill, 2012). They need to control ideological production through discourses that obtain canonical value by assigning high rank to capitalist intellectuals and through constant repetition by means of mind-numbing cultural productions designed to distract the people from their woes and to disqualify the claims of the oppressed as unreasonable, impractical and unpatriotic (Best et al, 2011).

John Bellamy Foster (2013a) argues that we are living in an "epochal crisis"--a term borrowed from Jason Moore--a tremulous period in which dire economic and ecological crises emerge inextricably entangled in each other. He cites systems ecologist Howard Odum's revelation that Latin Americans, in particular, are being systematically robbed of their environmental resources through an unequal exchange in trade and production, in which "embodied energy" is being withdrawn from the global South to the benefit of the global North--a situation which Garcia Linera refers to as "extraterritorial surplus value" (cited in Foster, 2013b). We are facing what Foster (2013a) describes as the unlimited expansion of a capitalist system geared to a process of abstract wealth creation. We are witnessing the displacement of natural-material use value by specifically capitalist use value, which does little more than enhance exchange value for the capitalist, so that the production of use value ceases and money creates money without producing any nature-material use value (Foster, 2013a).

The "real economy" is being hijacked by the irrational logic of monopoly-finance capitalism organized around financial-asset appreciation, which is dependent on an endless series of financial bubbles. Big corporations and wealthy investors, according to Foster (2013a), have "increasingly poured their surplus capital into the financial sphere in order to secure high speculative returns." The response to this additional demand for their products by financial institutions was to supply "an endless array of new, exotic speculative opportunities (junk bonds, derivatives, options, hedge funds, etc.)" (Foster, 2013a), which invariably leads to massive credit/debt. And all of this is occurring in the midst of human suffering, the magnitude of which is scarcely imaginable. According to Foster:

Behind the worldwide veil of capitalist value relations, hundreds of millions, even billions, of people are poor and destitute, often lacking the most basic prerequisites of material existence--adequate food, water, clothing, housing, employment, healthcare, and a nontoxic environment--due to the failures and contradictions of accumulation. Meanwhile, what ecologists call 'real wealth,' i.e., the product of nature itself, is being extracted from the environment on an ever-increasing scale devoid of any concern for either the rationality of production or the sustainability of natural systems, thereby robbing both present and future generations. Since unequal exchange relations with respect to both nature and labor prevail within the international economy this robbery falls disproportionately on poorer nations, a portion of whose natural use

values (and economic surplus) is systematically siphoned off to enrich nations at the apex of the global imperialist pyramid. (Foster, 2013a)

Samir Amin (2010) captures the general trends in the important evolution of capitalism by describing them in terms of generalized and financialized oligopolies run by plutocrats. According to Amin, since

[c]apitalism has reached a stage of centralization and concentration of capital out of all comparison with the situation only 50 years ago, [it is best described] as one of generalized oligopolies. 'Monopolies' (or, better, oligopolies) are in no way new inventions in modern history. What is new, however, is the limited number of registered oligopolies ('groups') which stands at about 500, if only the colossal ones are counted, and 3,000 to 5,000 in an almost comprehensive list. They now determine, through their decisions, the whole of economic life on the planet, and more besides. This capitalism of generalized oligopolies is thus a qualitative leap forward in the general evolution of capitalism. (Amin, 2010)

Paraphrasing Amin (2010), all types of production of goods and services--small, medium and large--are now subordinated to the oligopolies, which determine the conditions of their survival. The real reason for this is the search for maximum profits, which benefits the powerful groups who have priority access to capital markets. Such concentration--which has historically been the response of capital to the long, deep crises that have marked its history--is at the origin of the "financialization" of the system. Amin remarks that: "this is how the oligopolies siphon off the global surplus value produced by the production system, a 'rent monopoly' that enables oligopolistic groups to increase their rate of profit considerably. This levy is made possible because of 'the oligopolies' exclusive access to the monetary and financial markets which thus become the dominant markets." Amin tells us not to confuse financialization with "a regrettable drift linked to the 'deregulation' of financial markets, even less of 'accidents' (like subprimes) on which vulgar economics and its accompanying political discourse concentrate people's attention." On the contrary, financialization "is a necessary requirement for the reproduction of the system of generalized oligopolies." The capitalism of generalized and financialized oligopolies is also globalized, producing a growing gulf between the "developed" centers of the system and its dominated peripheries, and is associated with the emergence of the "collective imperialism of the Triad" (the USA and its external provinces of Canada and Australia, western and central Europe, and Japan). According to Amin:

The new globalization is itself inseparable from the exclusive control of access to the natural resources of the planet exercised by collective imperialism. Hence the center-peripheries contradiction --the North-South conflict in current parlance--is central to any possible transformation of the actually existing capitalism of our time. And more markedly than in the past, this, in turn, requires the 'military control of the planet' on the part of the collective imperialist center.

The different 'systemic crises' that have been studied and analyzed --the energy-guzzling nature of production systems, the agricultural and food crisis, and so on--are inseparable from the exigencies of the reproduction of the capitalism of generalized, financialized, and globalized oligopolies. If the status of these oligopolies is not brought into question, any policies to solve

these 'systemic crises' --'sustainable development' formulae--will just remain idle chitchat. (Amin, 2010)

The grave threat of a capitalism of generalized, financialized and globalized oligopolies is enhanced as a result of its private status, since its continuation is bound to result in the destruction of the societies on the peripheries--those in the so-called 'emerging' countries as well as in "marginalized" countries--and could very well mean the destruction of the entire planet. According to Amin:

Not only do the oligopolies dominate the economic life of the countries of the Triad. They monopolize political power for their own advantage, the electoral political parties (right and left) having become their debtors. This situation will be, for the foreseeable future, accepted as 'legitimate,' in spite of the degradation of democracy that it entails. It will not be threatened until, sometime in the future perhaps, 'anti-plutocratic fronts' are able to include on their agenda the abolition of the private management of oligopolies and their socialization, in complex and open-endedly evolving forms. (Amin, 2010)

Yet things are not going so well in some parts of the Triad. In Los Angeles County, in the most dominant country of Amin's Triad, close to where I am composing this article, an estimated 254,000 men, women and children experience homelessness during some part of the year. On any given night, approximately 82,000 people are homeless, and between 4,800 and 10,000 of them are young people. One-third of the homeless population in South and Metro Los Angeles holds a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 25% of the population as a whole (Wells, 2013). A fifth of the homeless are veterans and another fifth are disabled while a quarter are mentally ill and half are African American (Wells, 2013). Throughout the USA, 80% of the population face poverty or near poverty (Yen & Naziri, 2013). Gun violence is astronomical in the USA. According to Sean McElwee:

The U.S. leads the developed world in firearm-related murders, and the difference isn't a slight gap--more like a chasm. According to United Nations data, the U.S. has 20 times more murders than the developed world average. Our murder rate also dwarfs many developing nations, like Iraq, which has a murder rate less than half ours. More than half of the most deadly mass shootings documented in the past 50 years around the world occurred in the United States, and 73 percent of the killers in the U.S. obtained their weapons legally. Another study finds that the U.S. has one of the highest proportion of suicides committed with a gun. Gun violence varies across the U.S., but some cities like New Orleans and Detroit rival the most violent Latin American countries, where gun violence is highest in the world. (McElwee, 2014)

A striking and largely unremarked-upon characteristic of the USA is that, in many American counties, and in the Deep South especially, "life expectancy is lower than in Algeria, Nicaragua or Bangladesh," and that the USA "is the only developed country that does not guarantee health care to its citizens" (McElwee, 2014). This remains the case even after the Affordable Care Act. McElwee notes that:

America is unique among developed countries in that tens of thousands of poor Americans die because they lack health insurance, even while we spend more than twice as much of our GDP

[gross domestic product] on healthcare than the average for the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a collection of rich world countries. (McElwee, 2014)

The USA has a frightening infant mortality rate, "as well as the highest teenage-pregnancy rate in the developed world, largely because of the politically-motivated unavailability of contraception in many areas" (McElwee, 2014).

As far as raising children goes, McElwee (2014) notes that the USA "is among only three nations in the world that does not guarantee paid maternal leave (the other two are Papua New Guinea and Swaziland)." Poor American mothers must face the choice between raising their children and keeping their jobs. McElwee offers the following sweeping condemnation of the US education system:

The U.S. education system is plagued with structural racial biases, like the fact that schools are funded at the local, rather than national level. That means that schools attended by poor black people get far less funding than the schools attended by wealthier students. The Department of Education has confirmed that schools with high concentrations of poor students have lower levels of funding. It's no wonder America has one of the highest achievement gaps between high income and low income students, as measured by the OECD. Schools today are actually more racially segregated than they were in the 1970s. Our higher education system is unique among developed nations in that [it] is funded almost entirely privately, by debt. Students in the average OECD country can expect about 70 percent of their college tuition to be publicly funded; in the United States, only about 40 percent of the cost of education is publicly-funded. That's one reason the U.S. has the highest tuition costs of any OECD country. (McElwee, 2014)

Of course, there is a racial dimension to inequities within the US public school system, especially when examining the statistical facts of gaps between the outcomes of students disaggregated by race and affluence and comparing them with the statistical facts of disproportionate numbers of teachers among races. And, of course, when you compare these to the realities of the school-to-prison pipeline, and the re-segregation of schools, we can see a national trend.

We know that in nearly every indicator, the USA has the largest income inequality in the OECD countries. Its infrastructure is crumbling and, in places such as South Dakota, Alaska and Pennsylvania, century-old wooden pipes are used to transport water (McElwee, 2014). Sewer lines and wastewater capacity date back to the mid nineteenth century in large portions of the USA. One in nine bridges is considered to be structurally deficient.

In the midst of the current epochal crisis, the US Department of Education and its spokespersons in the corporate media are diverting us away from the central issues of the crisis of capitalism and the ecological crisis by turning our attention to the failure of public schools (McLaren, 2006, 2012). They propose, as a solution, to smash public schools and the commons by unleashing the hurricane of privatization (the term hurricane is metaphorically appropriate here in a double sense, since New Orleans went from a public school system to a charter school city after Hurricane Katrina (see Democracy Now, 2007), causing unionized teachers to drop from 4700 to 500. Of course, this is not symptomatic only of the USA. We are facing the imperatives of the

transnational capitalist class and so the challenge to public education is occurring on a transnational scale.

Yet violence is not simply linked to financial indexes, as frightening as those have been of late. Violence is more than a series of contingencies unleashed by the labor/capital antagonism that drives the engines of capitalism. It is more than a series of historical accidents transformed into a necessity. In fact, it is the very founding act of US civilization. While violence can be traced to worldwide social polarization linked to the phenomenon of capitalist over-accumulation and attempts by the transnational capitalist class to sustain profit-making by means of militarized accumulation, financial speculation and the plundering of public finance (Robinson, 2008), it can also be traced historically to epistemologies of violence and linked to the genocides brought about by the invasion and colonization of the Americas (Grosfoguel, 2013). Here, violence can be viewed as foundational to the Cartesian logic of Western epistemology, as the universal truth upon which all our understandings of the world must rely. Such violence can be seen across a host of institutional structures, including education, and in particular through "banking" approaches to teaching that preclude dialogue and thus privilege Western epistemology, omitting and systematically erasing other world views. Indeed, Paulo Freire would maintain that dialogue necessarily brings forth the epistemologies grounded in particular social positions. Not surprisingly, the historical conditions that have brought us to a place of Western domination are linked to "undialogic" social relations (Grosfoguel, 2013).

Ramon Grosfoguel, Enrique Dussel, Anibal Quijano and other decolonial thinkers have argued convincingly that the ego cogito ("I think, therefore I am") which underwrites Descartes's concept of modernity replaced the prior Christian dominant perspective with a secular, but God-like, unsituated and monolithic politics of knowledge, attributed mainly to white European men. The presumed separation and superiorization of mind over body of the ego cogito establishes a knowledge system dissociated from the body's positioning in time and space, and achieves a certitude of knowledge--as if inhabiting a solipsistic universe--by means of an internal monologue, isolated from social relations with other human beings (Grosfoguel, 2013). This ego cogito did not suddenly drop from the sky; it arose out of the historical and epistemic conditions of possibility developed through the ego conquiro ("I conquer, therefore I am"), and the link between the two is the ego extermino ("I exterminate you, therefore I am").

Grosfoguel and Dussel maintain that the ego conquiro is the foundation of the "Imperial Being," which began with European colonial expansion in 1492, when white men began to think of themselves as the center of the world because they had conquered the world. The ego extermino is the logic of genocide/epistemicide that mediates the "I conquer" with the epistemic racism/sexism of the "I think" as the new foundation of knowledge in the modern/colonial world. More specifically, the ego extermino can be situated in the four genocides/epistemicides of the sixteenth century, which were carried out

- 1) against Muslims and Jews in the conquest of Al-Andalus in the name of 'purity of blood';
- 2) against indigenous peoples first in the Americas and then in Asia;
- 3) against African people with the captive trade and their enslavement in the Americas;
- 4) against women who practiced and transmitted Indo-European knowledge in Europe burned alive accused of being witches.

(Grosfoguel, 2013, p. 77)

According to Grosfoguel (2013), these four genocides are interlinked and "constitutive of the modern/colonial world's epistemic structures" and Western male epistemic privilege, and we can certainly see these genocides reflected in the founding of the USA, in particular the massacre of indigenous peoples, the transatlantic slave trade and the Salem witch trials.

This genocidal history has been repressed in the structural unconscious of the nation (the term "structural unconscious" is taken from Lichtman, 1982). The assertion here is that the contradiction between the claims of ideology and the actual structure of social power, and the need to defend oneself against socially constructed antagonisms, is the primary challenge that faces the ego. The function of the structural unconscious is therefore to reconcile reality and ideology at the level of the nation state, and this requires conceptual structures to help citizens adjust to its genocidal history (McLaren, 1999; Monzo & McLaren, 2014). These structures comprise the foundations for coping strategies and are provided by the myths of democracy, rugged individualism and white supremacy that lie at the heart of US capitalist society. Racialized violence is the domestic expression of the American structural unconscious, whose function is to provide psychic power to the myth of America's providential history--that as a country it has been ordained by providence to democratize and civilize the heathen world. The structural unconscious is the lifeblood of the national religion of genocide (Monzo & McLaren, 2014). It continues to legitimize genocide, ecocide and epistemicide (the obliteration of indigenous ecosystems of the mind).

Today, we see this totalizing effect on America's structural unconscious as we live out our lives through the whims of the market, seeking happiness in an ever increasing consumption of things we feel we need and justifying our superficial existence as the "successful" outcome of our "hard work." We have stopped questioning, and perhaps even caring as a society, why some people are more deserving than others of the basic necessities of life--food, health and dignity--and simply accepted the myth that some people do not work hard enough to get ahead, and that individual social ascendance based on presumed merits and motivation is just and right--that our existence alone is not sufficient to deserve basic human needs and that these must be "earned." Likewise, we have stopped questioning who benefits from the chaos that exists in particular communities, and have accepted that the natural world has been antiseptically cleaved and cordoned off into binary oppositions--wealthy/poor, white/of color--and that it is the providential role of the USA to "democratize" by means of our mighty arsenal of weapons those populations who threaten our economic interests and geopolitical advantage. We operate, of course, by the divine mandate that mere mortals must simply accept--that accepting our role as the global policeman is "God's will" and is as "good" for us as it is for the rest of the world.

Anyone who spends time travelling throughout the USA would be hard-pressed to disagree that our cities and our countryside lie in ruins. Riven by greed, ignorance and a belief in the imperishability of the market, our civilization is collapsing as we tunnel underneath it with the hope of escaping the worst of its hubris. Transnational capitalism, which remains unhindered and sufficiently versatile despite its intemperate balance between retroactive and anticipatory forces, has shown itself to be a self-sustaining edifice chillingly untouched by the cataclysm which it has provoked. Wary of resorting to protectionism, statism, nationalism, militarism and possibly war, the elites of the world are pleased that the USA is maintaining its role as the world's policeman,

keeping social order on a world scale in order to create the most fecund conditions for capital accumulation and to destroy any popular challenges to the existing structures of class relations.

The wrecking ball of capitalism has torn through the very earth itself, as if it were affixed to the highest rung of Jacob's ladder by an angel gone astray, perhaps the result of a drinking spree in one of those taverns hidden away in the catacombs running underneath the Tower of Babel. Despite the deeply pitted sense of fear and existential terror that has accompanied immiseration capitalism since the crisis of 2008, this all-pervading and all-propelling unholy scourge appears to be indefinitely self-replenishing.

I wish to make a few comments about critical pedagogy as a lodestone through which we can consider how to organize the social division of labor and the realm of necessity, so as to enable humans to satisfy their social and individual needs. This is a daunting challenge, given that public education today is all but dead yet refuses to acknowledge its own demise, and its once proud luminaries fail to see how capitalism is one of the key factors that bears much of the responsibility. The terms of the debate over what to do with education's rotting carcass are selectively adduced by blue-chip brokers in the flora-stuffed, starched-linen breakfast rooms of expensive hotels to remind the public in opulently elusive ways that the importance of education today revolves around increasing the range of educational choices available to communities by privatizing education. Consequently, the debate today which could only be described as death-haunted and excremental--has an uncompromisingly narrow and understocked conceptual vocabulary, consisting of pithy yet comparatively slippery terms such as "free choice," "common core," "competency-based education" and "accountability," all bound up in a supererogatory embrace of democracy. Competencies, which clearly define what students will accomplish to demonstrate learning for a workforce-related need, are an improvement in some ways--i.e. students can better pace themselves--but ultimately these competencies must be rendered measurable. All of these terms, of course, are endlessly retranscribable depending on what educational crisis happens to be the public's flavor of the month.

The emergence of Massive Open Online Courses, adaptive learning environments, peer-to-peer learning platforms, third-party service providers, and new online learning technology, and increased emphasis on learning outcomes and assessment, obscures the question of why we are educating students in the first place. Standardized testing occupies a world where the humanity of students is enslaved to a particular analytic structure, combining instrumental reason, positivism and one-dimensional objectivity. Its heteronomous dogma is all about increasing control of our external and internal nature, creating a reified consciousness in which the wounds of our youth are hidden behind the armor of instrumentality. Reason has become irrational as the animate is confused with the inanimate; students are turned into objects where the imprint of unbeing is left upon being.

Higher education pundits are propitious for saying that university education creates democratic citizens who are ready to take the hefty helm of government and steer it to glory. Yet the hysterical nucleus of capitalism--in which systems of higher education are inextricably embedded--is one in which the labor of the working class is alienated and in which the surplus value created by workers in the normal functioning of the economic process is appropriated by the capitalist. The workers are paid wages that are less than the price of the force of labor

expended in their work. This value beyond the price of labor is surplus labor and is made possible only because the workers themselves do not possess the means of production. All the good works made possible by higher education are calamitously wasted in the pursuit of profit. While cautiously adjusting its role to the fluctuating needs of capital, and vigorously safeguarding its connections to corporate power, higher education has become unknowingly imprinted with an astonishing variety of reactionary social practices as it unsuccessfully tries to hide that it is in cahoots with the repressive state apparatuses and the military-industrial complex, and works to create the hive known as the national security state. Impecunious students are taught to be dedicated to the hive (as indentured servants as a result of soaring tuition fees), which is conditioned by the pathogenic pressures of profit-making. Within the hive, the capitalist unconscious turns murderously upon what is left of the Enlightenment as the irresolutely corporate conditions under which knowledge is produced reduce the products of the intellect to inert commodities. Higher education offers mainly on-the-cheap analyses of how capitalism impacts the production of knowledge and fails, in the main, to survey ways of creating an alternative social universe unburdened by value formation, and, in the end, offers us little more than a vision of a discount-store democracy. In making capitalism aprioristic to civilized societies, corporate education has replaced stakeholders with shareholders and has become the unthinkable extremity towards which education is propelled under the auspices of the cash nexus--propelled by a hunger for profit as unfillable as a black hole that would extinguish use value if allowed to run its course.

Under earlier dispensations, education had many names--it was paidea, it was critical citizenship, it was counter-hegemonic, it was transformational, it was a lot of things. Over time, its descriptions changed as its objects changed, and now it is distinguished by a special nomenclature most often drawn from the world of management and business. While critical educators have striven to formulate their work clearly, and have defended their arguments with formidable weapons of dialectical reasoning, there is a new call by some Marxists and eco-pedagogues to expand the struggle as anti-capitalist agitation. This is to be welcomed, of course, but education as a revolutionary process will likely not seem time-honored enough for most readers to take seriously, with the exception perhaps of the work of Paulo Freire, whose storied corpus of texts exerts a continuous subterranean pressure on the critical tradition, and amply and brilliantly demonstrates its best features.

Some, however, would argue that Freire's work is as much about what education should be like after the revolution as it is about forging the revolution through a pedagogy of praxis. But if one considers revolutionaries such as Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara and Hugo Chavez, Sub-comandante Marcos, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X as educators, then socialist education will have some gold-standard forebears and less likely be banished into the outer darkness. If we consider the above list of educators as ancestors, we can begin to see ourselves as part of a distinguished tradition of warriors fighting for the conditions of possibility for a socially and economically just society. A further long-term task awaits the critical educator who combines competence as a political historian with skills in dialectical theory, with an eye to sustainability studies. But creating a subalternist historiography of critical education, and developing educational initiatives that foreground democratic national rights and the collective welfare of all peoples, assumes that the planet will survive the unipolar world of US hegemony.

The USA enacts its "civilizing" mission in a hail of macabre counterterrorism methods employed by President Obama. There are those who are protesting in the universities and the workplace, but they pay a price. Inhumanity and exploitation are rife, and many natural and unnatural antiauthoritarians are now psychopathologized and medicated--or thrown out of the institutions of higher learning--before they achieve political consciousness of society's most oppressive strategies and tactics. Those who do achieve political consciousness and try to redress the injustices that are so acutely widespread throughout the USA might find themselves on a National Security Agency surveillance list.

One person with the vision and fortitude to consider a liberatory alternative to Obama's foreign and domestic policy is Cornel West. In the beginning of the Obama presidency, it was easy to see how Cornel West, who did 65 campaign events for Obama, was drawn to Obama's progressive-sounding politics, since Obama clearly displayed at that time some very impressive populist attributes, even though Obama had been mentored by the vulpine milquetoast and political quisling par extraordinaire, Joe Lieberman. But early on, with the assembling of Obama's economic team, it became clearer to West that Obama had a Machiavellian side and was pandering to the Wall Street oligarchs. In time, his centrist neoliberal position became unwavering. West laments the lack of backbone in Obama, especially at this particular historical juncture that West, cited in Hedges (2014), describes as

maybe America's last chance to fight back against the greed of the Wall Street oligarchs and corporate plutocrats, to generate some serious discussion about public interest and common good that sustains any democratic experiment....we are squeezing out all of the democratic juices that we have. The escalation of the class war against the poor and the working class is intense. More and more working people are beaten down. They are world-weary. They are into self-medication. They are turning on each other. They are scapegoating the most vulnerable rather than confronting the most powerful. It is a profoundly human response to panic and catastrophe. I thought Barack Obama could have provided some way out. But he lacks backbone. (West, cited in Hedges, 2014)

In April, 2009, during a meeting of the 5th Summit of the Americas in Trinidad, President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, one of the great world leaders and courageous defender of the poor and powerless, gifted President Obama with a copy of *The Open Veins of Latin America*, a brilliant book by Eduardo Galeano of Uruguay, who happens to be one of my favorite writers. The book, which was banned during periods of military dictatorship in Chile, Uruguay and Argentina, documents the plundering of Latin America by Europe and the United States.

The book given to Obama was in Spanish but an English translation has been available from Monthly Review Press since 1971. Somebody needs to send Obama the English translation. But even if he did decide to flip through it one night, would his imagination be able to focus enough so that his eyes could see?

In *Cypherpunks: freedom and the future of the Internet*, Julian Assange puts forward an unambiguous--and I dare say poetic--indictment of government and corporate surveillance, anti-file-sharing legislation and the social media phenomenon that has seen users willingly collaborate with sites such as Google, Facebook and Twitter, which wish to collect their personal

data. Assange famously describes the Internet as similar to "having a tank in your bedroom," and writes that a mobile phone serves merely as a "tracking device that also makes calls" (Assange et al, 2012, pp. 33, 49). Assange continues with the ominous prediction that "the universality of the internet will merge global humanity into one giant grid of mass surveillance and mass control" (Assange et al., 2012, p. 6). Resistance must therefore include encrypting your online activity, so that it will be possible to create an information network which the state will not be able to decipher.

We are moving very quickly towards a transnational dystopia--in particular, a postmodern surveillance dystopia. Assange is clear about the violence brewing just below the surface of the state. He notes:

Most of the time we are not even aware of how close to violence we are, because we all grant concessions to avoid it. Like sailors smelling the breeze, we rarely contemplate how our surface world is propped up from below by darkness. (Assange et al., 2012, p. 3)

Assange juxtaposes the Platonic realm of the Internet with the fascist designs of the state-- designs given force by the seizure of the physical infrastructure that makes the global Internet culture possible--fiber-optic cables, satellites and their ground stations, computer servers. We are no longer safe within Plato's cave. Everything produced inside the cave has been hijacked, stored in secret warehouses the size of small cities, creating a frightening imbalance of power between computer users and those who have the power to sort through and control the information generated in the network. The only force that Assange sees capable of saving democracy is the creation of a "cryptographic veil" to hide the location of our cybernetic Platonic caves and to continue to use our knowledge to redefine the state.

You do not have to inhabit the dank bowels of a cybernetic Platonic cave to recognize that Obama's crimes are more slippery than those of Bush, but no less egregious. When it was Bush ordering the slaughter of innocents in Iraq, or Cheney profiting from the spoils of war through his company Halliburton, it was easy to feel chilled by Bush's fraternity prankster face and Cheney's slanted mouth. When Cheney tried to smile, his permanent sneer would lift and a Jack-o'-lantern rictus would suddenly appear on what was formerly his stern countenance. But Obama has a handsomely compelling face and personality, and it is more difficult to see him in terms of a mass murderer. One could hypothetically ask: What really differentiates these mass murderers from Vasili Blohkin, Cheka member and Stalin's favorite executioner, who once personally dispatched 250 captured Poles each night over 28 consecutive nights (for which he holds the Guinness World Record of "most prolific executioner")? We can only imagine how execution-style chic Blohkin looked, all decked out in his leather butcher's apron, his jaunty leather cap and shoulder-length leather gloves, which he wore during his "irreproachable service" for Stalin during the Yezhovshchina purge, even blowing out the base of Nikolai Yezhov's skull (Stalin's infamous apparatchik, for whom the terror was named) in the very execution chamber designed by Yezhov, with a sloping cement floor, drain and hose, and a log-lined wall. This is a far more hideous image than Obama with his feet up on his desk in the Oval Office. Of course there is a remarkably big difference between the crimes of Bush, Obama and Stalin. But the fact that there are more heinous killers in the rogue's gallery of political leaders than Bush Jr and Obama should not cause us to downplay the seriousness of their crimes.

Obama's soaring rhetoric is now his downfall, as his words are now seen as harvested from a manufacturing plant miles away from his own brainpan. A president who publicly laments gun violence but deifies "the troops" and relishes the lethal effectiveness of drone strikes offers us a contradiction so stark as to leave us speechless. Obama's words and convictions are as far apart as the poles of a refrigerator magnet you purchased on your last visit to Martha's Vineyard, and the latest General Electric French Door Refrigerator your neighbor splurged on to make you envious, as reflected in a description by Cornel West in an interview with journalist Chris Hedges:

He is a shell of a man ... There is no deep conviction. There is no connection to something bigger than him. It is a sad spectacle, sad if he were not the head of an empire that is in such decline and so dangerous ...

The most pernicious development is the incorporation of the black prophetic tradition into the Obama imperial project ... Obama used [Martin Luther] King's Bible during his inauguration, but under the National Defense Authorization Act King would be detained without due process. He would be under surveillance every day because of his association with Nelson Mandela, who was the head of a "terrorist" organization, the African National Congress. We see the richest prophetic tradition in America desecrated in the name of a neoliberal worldview, a worldview King would be in direct opposition to. Martin would be against Obama because of his neglect of the poor and the working class and because of the [aerial] drones, because he is a war president, because he draws up kill lists. And Martin King would have nothing to do with that. (Hedges, 2013)

Hedges summarizes his own opinion of Obama as follows:

The wide swath of destruction Obama has overseen on behalf of the corporate state includes the eradication of most of our civil liberties and our privacy, the expansion of imperial war, the use of kill lists, abject subservience to Wall Street's criminal class and the military-industrial complex, the relentless persecution of whistleblowers, mass incarceration of poor people of color and the failure to ameliorate the increasing distress of the poor and the working class. His message to the black underclass in the midst of the corporate rape of the nation is drawn verbatim from the Booker T. Washington playbook. He tells them to work harder--as if anyone works harder than the working poor in this country--and obey the law. (Hedges, 2013)

I find little to disagree with in the above descriptions by West and Hedges, partly because my own formation--Bildung--as an educator was through the African American prophetic tradition, which deeply impacted the civil rights movement, as well as the Marxist humanist movement pioneered by Raya Dunayevskaya. What punishment is due to war criminals such as Obama? Dipping his Aesopian tongue in kerosene and igniting it with a smoldering lump of coal from the fire around which Afghan tribal leaders sit to mourn the death of family members, whose families have lost relatives in Obama's drone attacks? Will there ever be any justice in this regard for two US presidents who, after September 11, 2001, launched two wars that have killed more than a million people and contributed to ongoing instability and violence that continue to this day? If we can put aside for a moment the sentimental inducements that accompany discussions of 9/11 in the public square, there is another 9/11 that we need to take into consideration:

September 11, 1973, when Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger helped to orchestrate a coup of Salvador Allende's government in Chile. Mark Weisbrot quotes Richard Nixon on why he wanted the Allende socialist government to be overthrown:

President Richard Nixon was clear, at least in private conversations, about why he wanted the coup that destroyed one [of] the hemisphere's longest-running democracies, from his point of view: 'The main concern in Chile is that [President Salvador Allende] can consolidate himself, and the picture projected to the world will be his success ... If we let the potential leaders in South America think they can move like Chile and have it both ways, we will be in trouble.' (Weisbrot, 2013)

Nixon and Kissinger led the way in Chile for a rule of terror by coup leader Augusto Pinochet, to whom they gave the green light to assassinate Allende and strategic assistance from the US military:

The U.S. government was one of the main organisers and perpetrators of the September 11, 1973 military coup in Chile, and these perpetrators also changed the world--of course much for the worse. The coup snuffed out an experiment in Latin American social democracy, established a military dictatorship that killed, tortured, and disappeared tens of thousands of people, and for a quarter-century mostly prevented Latin Americans from improving their living standards and leadership through the ballot box. (Weisbrot, 2013)

The rule of terror in Chile, courtesy of the US government, is nothing new. The Vietnam War is closer to home for most Americans. Listening to the transcripts of White House tape recordings between President Nixon and his advisors on April 25, 1972, and May, 1972 leads us to believe that the outcome could have been much worse for the North Vietnamese:

President Nixon: How many did we kill in Laos? National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger: In the Laotian thing, we killed about ten, fifteen [thousand] ...

Nixon: See, the attack in the North [Vietnam] that we have in mind ... power plants, whatever's left--POL [petroleum], the docks ... And, I still think we ought to take the dikes out now. Will that drown people?

Kissinger: About two hundred thousand people.

Nixon: No, no, no ... I'd rather use the nuclear bomb. Have you got that, Henry?

Kissinger: That, I think, would just be too much.

Nixon: The nuclear bomb, does that bother you? ... I just want you to think big, Henry, for Christsakes.

May 2, 1972:

Nixon: America is not defeated. We must not lose in Vietnam ...

The surgical operation theory is all right, but I want that place bombed to smithereens. If we draw the sword, we're gonna bomb those bastards all over the place. Let it fly, let it fy. (Blum, 2014).

I have advocated for a critical patriotism (McLaren, 2013) in my work in critical pedagogy, a pedagogy that would identify and condemn crimes against humanity perpetrated by the USA, as a way of avoiding future tragedies. As a way of countering the attitude of government advisors such as Michael Ledeen, former Defense Department consultant and holder of the Freedom Chair at the American Enterprise Institute, who opines sardonically: "Every ten years or so, the United States needs to pick up some small crappy little country and throw it against the wall, just to show the world we mean business" (Blum, 2014). In high school history classes, we do not hear much about the US atrocities during the Philippine-American War (1899-1902), the coup in Chile or about Pinochet's feared Caribellos; or the assassinations of Catholic priests organizing cooperatives in the Guatemalan towns of Quetzaltenango, Huehuetenango, San Marcos and Solola; or the failed coup against the Venezuelan government of Hugo Chavez in 2002; or the role of the CIA in destabilizing Latin American and Middle Eastern regimes throughout the centuries; or the history of the USA as the supreme master of focused and unidirectional aggression, whose intransigent martial will has made it the most feared country in history. Nor do we learn about the Zapatista uprising which occurred as a result of government oppression in the towns of the Selva, Altos, Norte and Costa regions of Chiapas, and took place in San Cristobal de las Casas, Las Margaritas, Altamirano, Oxchuc, Huixtan, Chanal and Ocosingo, and involved Tzotzils, Tzeltals, Tojolabals, Chols, Mams and Zoques.

McLaren, Peter