Cultural Logic: Marxist Theory & Practice
2015-2017 (Whole Number 22), pp. 137-156

Critical Revolutionary Praxis in the Neoliberal University

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I would like to begin with some reflections on the theme of this double issue of *Works and Days* and *Cultural Logic, Transforming Praxis in and beyond the University*. The phrase, "transforming praxis," which obviously refers to Marx's work, is a pleonasm. For Marx, all praxis is transformative, although the object and mode of transformation varies in the two kinds of praxis he describes.

The fundamental form of praxis is labor as a "nature-imposed necessity" (*1844 Manuscripts*). Human beings emerged from the natural world when the process of biological evolution produced a species whose behavior is underdetermined by instincts, a species that must engage in conscious, transformative activity in order to survive and develop. Animals transform the environments they inhabit in various ways, including by producing useful objects, such as beehives and beaver damns. But these products are the results of biological activities innate to the species. Although most animals are undoubtedly conscious, their consciousness is not a determinant of their productive activity, while consciousness is an intrinsic part of the process of human making. In Marx's account, the distinctively human activity of labor begins with the creation of the mental image of an object capable of satisfying a need; a tool, dwelling, garment, weapon, or the like. It proceeds to make that image objectively real

– and so satisfy the corresponding need – by transforming nature through the motions of the human body. In this way, it "opposes to nature one of its own forces" in order to create an object that nature does not produce spontaneously. In the process of realizing the initial image by reshaping nature outside the body, the internal nature of the species is also transformed. Skills, powers, knowledge, and sensibilities are developed, and the body is brought under disciplined control as the primary instrument of labor.

Praxis in the form of labor is fundamental to human existence since it is a perpetual requirement that must be met in the interest of individual and species survival. Labor is the price human beings must pay for the transition from animal instinct to conscious, goaldirected activity. The Book of Genesis gets it right when it tells us that Adam achieves consciousness (of his and Eve's nakedness) when he eats the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. As punishment, when he is expelled from the Garden of Eden, the ground is cursed, and he is condemned to "eat of it in toil" all the days of his life. Marx agrees with the author of Genesis that the curse is real, but unlike the biblical writer, he believes that it can be weakened solely by means of human effort. Over the course of history, labor becomes increasingly productive through the development of knowledge, skills, and technology, and the possibility arises of shortening the working day. The realm of necessity can never be entirely abolished, but on its basis a realm of freedom may arise in the form of free time. This is time that can be devoted to the pursuit of self-chosen activity

beyond the demands of the working day. But if increasing labor productivity is to take the form of a realm of freedom rather than one of unemployment or manipulated leisure, a second kind of praxis is necessary, a praxis that transforms society rather than nature.

At all stages of history, the labor-process is social in character, and it is so even beyond the forms of direct cooperation that most work involves. Work occurs in the context of relations of production that constitute a kind of "second nature" (Hegel), a new layer of objective reality that individuals cannot avoid and to which they must adapt. These relations assign specialized productive and organizational functions to the members of different social groups, for example, lineages, genders, and age-cohorts in classless tribal societies. When classes develop, the relations of production crystalize around the fundamental division between those who work and those who direct the work of others, in the process extracting and appropriating an economic surplus above the subsistence needs of society. The second kind of praxis occurs in this objective social context. It consists in activity whose goal is to transform the relations of production, including the relations between classes. When it involves critical reflection, Marx calls such transformative activity "revolutionary, practical-critical activity." The phrase is from the first of the *Theses on Feuerbach*, but, for present purposes, I will substitute for it the slightly less cumbersome expression, "critical revolutionary praxis." The agent of transformation in this second form of praxis is not the individual person active in the productive process, but rather a collective actor, a class subordinate to that of the surplus-extractors. Individuals can influence the outcome of class struggles, but only when the principal actors, the classes themselves, have first gone into motion. The October Revolution might have failed to occur had Lenin not threatened to leave the Bolshevik Party unless its Central Committee agreed to launch an insurrection. But the insurrection was successful only because the working class and the peasantry had already abandoned Kerensky's government over its refusal to end Russian involvement in the First World War. (Lenin was able to gauge the degree of support for an insurrection from the exploited classes by following the votes in the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers Deputies).

Since surplus-extraction, including that involved in imperialist war, benefits the extractors and disadvantages other classes, it inevitably elicits collective acts of resistance, rebellion, and revolution. The history of class societies is rife with examples – slave rebellions, peasant revolts, urban guild uprisings, military mutinies, political revolutions, and so forth. The vast majority of these not only fail, but must fail from Marx's perspective. This is so for two kinds of reasons.

The first concerns objective circumstances that prevent a subordinate class from taking the place of the dominant class. If the existing relations of production facilitate development of the methods and instruments of need-satisfaction (the "means of production"), the class that is dominant within these relations is "progressive." It is in a position to shape society by moving it forward, and develops its power, self-confidence, and the consent of other classes in so doing. The possibility of transforming relations of production arises only when they inhibit further development of the productive forces or result in their regression. In his analysis of the failure of the revolutions of 1848, Marx argued that a world trade crisis had breached the normal defenses of the old regimes, and permitted the unprecedented uprisings in fifty-odd countries in which artisans and wage laborers played an important role for the first time in history. When the subsequent discovery of gold in California brought the crisis to an end, the return of prosperity sealed that breach, allowing the dominant classes to recover their self-confidence and ability to

shape events. In general, social, economic, and political crises result from conflicts between the universal human desire to satisfy needs, and relations of production that block need-satisfaction. In such cases, the relations of production must be transformed if crises are to be resolved in the long run, and the productive forces to advance. Transformation of the relations of production demands the political, economic, and ideological defeat of the dominant class which, of course, is advantaged by the prevailing relations of production, and so defends them even when they become an obstacle to the satisfaction of needs.

The dominant class may survive a particular crisis, but at the cost of more difficult crises in the future. The 1848 revolutions were merely the beginning of a long wave of revolutionary responses to crises in global capitalism, including the Paris Commune (1871), the Russian Revolution (1905-1917), the German Revolution (1918), the Hungarian Revolution (1919), the occupation of the factories in Italy (1920), the Yugoslav Revolution (1945), the Greek Civil Wars (194649), the Chinese Revolution (1911-49), the Vietnamese Revolution (1954), the Cuban Revolution (1953-59), the Congo Crisis (196065), the Algerian War of Independence (1962), the Portuguese Revolution (1974-75), the Wars of Independence in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau (1964-75), and the Nicaraguan Revolution (1978-79). The revolutionary wave appeared to come to an end with the collapse of the "actually existing socialist regimes" in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in 1989-91. We now know that the appearance was an illusion. The financial collapse of 200708 and the responses it received four years later in the Arab Spring, the Spanish Idignado demonstrations, and the Occupy Wall Street movement refuted the idea that history came to an end with the demise of the East Bloc regimes.

In addition to the objective conflict between forces and relations of production, there are subjective conditions of critical revolutionary praxis that must be met if society is to be transformed. A subordinate class or alliance of classes must exist that aspires to create new relations of production in which it becomes the dominant class or class alliance; it must have the organizational strength and strategic position in the productive process enabling it to create such relations; and it must be capable of critical reflection on the nature of its goal, and the strategy and tactics necessary to achieve it. If it fails in any of these three respects, critical revolutionary praxis is bound to fail.

Transformation of the relations of production is clearly a much more complicated affair than transformation of the natural world through labor, even in its most highly developed technological forms. To be sure, there are important analogies between the two types of praxis. Both begin with an existing complex of objects; nature in one case and relations of production – "second nature" – in the other. Both involve the attempt to transform the complex by consciously realizing an envisioned goal. And both involve the development of new capacities of organization, knowledge, and skill in the subject that engages in transformative activity. But labor works upon a substrate governed by physical and biological laws alone, while critical revolutionary praxis seeks to transform relations of production that are defended by a conscious actor (the dominant class). In this regard, critical revolutionary praxis has more in common with war – which it indeed often involves – than it has with labor. Even in peaceful revolutions, the actions of the enemy can anticipate and counter the actions of one's own forces. To act effectively, it is necessary to anticipate the enemy's anticipations and counter-actions, and take measures to block them. This is why in revolution, as in war, matters of strategy and tactics are vital. There is no analogue for strategy and tactics in the case of labor, because the laborer

works on a substrate that does not include entities who envision goals, or understand the pursuit of goals by others. The praxis that transforms nature and the praxis that transforms society are such radically different kinds of transformative activity that subsuming both under the genus "praxis," though logically unassailable, risks overlooking their uniqueness.

It is sobering to recognize that successful revolutions have never brought a class of surplus-producers to power. The Spartacus rebellion in ancient Rome ended with the crucifixion of thousands of rebel slaves. The peasant uprisings in Germany were drowned in blood, with Martin Luther's active encouragement. The communist Digger colony of poor farmers at George's Hill during the English Revolution was dispatched by sheriffs in a matter of days. Thiers' army defeated the Paris Commune in little more than two months. This pattern is evident even in the Russian Revolution of 1905-1917, in which the urban working class played an initial leading role, and the Chinese Revolution of 1911-1949, in which the peasantry played an analogous role. In both cases, though the revolutions succeeded, party and state bureaucracies soon took the place of the surplus-producers as rulers of the new societies.

For Marx, however, there can be no substitute for the class of wage-workers when it comes to overthrowing capitalism and reorganizing society on a socialist basis. The working class alone creates capital, which is nothing more than "dead labor," the objectification of past laboring activity. Moreover, capital must be "bathed in the fire" (*Capital*, vol. 1) of living labor if it is to come to life again. The significance of this necessity is illustrated by the fact that, when workers withdraw their labor in a general strike, capital ceases to function throughout the whole of society. At a certain stage in its development, the bourgeoisie becomes a parasite on the social body. When it accomplishes its historic task of developing industry, the world-market, and a global proletariat, it makes itself obsolete. In the phrase of Marx and Engels, it calls into existence its own "gravediger." But it is not so easy for the working class to dig that grave. In order to do so, it must achieve an extraordinary degree of organizational cohesion, which means that it must overcome its internal national, ethnic, racial, gender, and sectoral divisions. It must develop the capacity for flexible tactical maneuver and alliance with other social forces without losing sight of its ultimate strategic goal. And it must acquire the technical knowledge, commitment, and capacity for self-criticism necessary to reconstruct society on a new foundation.

In spite of their pronounced differences, laboring praxis and critical revolutionary praxis are organically connected in capitalism because only the class whose members perform labor is capable of revolutionizing society. Not only does the working class create and revitalize capital, but that creation establishes the conditions necessary for its transcendence. Capitalist industrialization, including the misnamed "postindustrial" expansion of work in the service sector (better seen as the adaptation of industrial methods to services), concentrates workers in their places of employment. This permits the development of power through workplace organization, including the ability to paralyze centers of production, distribution, communication, and reproduction of labor-power (schools, universities, hospitals, fast food restaurants, and so on) by wielding the weapon of the strike. Even the increasingly desiccated husk of contemporary representative democracy provides ways of pursuing working-class interests politically, including the ballot referendum. Development of the means of communication makes it possible for workers' organizations to create their own printed or electronic media. The need for skilled, semi-skilled, technical, and scientific labor develops and

disseminates the knowledge necessary to reorganize and self-manage complicated systems of production, distribution, communication, and reproduction. The concentration of capital and coordination of labor in giant corporations collectivizes the means of production, even though the juridical form of private ownership persists. This makes it possible to complete the socialization of the economy by abolishing what is nearly a legal fiction. (It would be far easier, for example, to bring Starbucks into social ownership than 12,000 locally owned coffee shops). Finally, the enormous expansion of the working class – especially its industrial manufacturing component – on a global scale makes the project of a world socialist movement conceivable.

It goes without saying that there are powerful counter-tendencies working against each of these possibilities. Automation has shed millions of manufacturing jobs in the economically most advanced countries, while service sector jobs tend to be dispersed in more workplaces than the manufacturing jobs of the past. Representative democracy has never been more openly controlled by banks, corporations, and the very rich than it is today. Electronic communication, fast replacing print media, is dominated by a handful of media and advertising companies, and this is true even of the decentralized internet. The dissemination of knowledge through schools, universities, and training programs that could make self-management possible also strengthens employers by flooding high skill labor markets, thereby driving down the cost of educated labor. The concentration of capital in multinational corporations, especially in the era of computerized networks, allows companies to move productive operations to low-wage countries. And the global expansion of the working class multiplies the difficulties involved in achieving organizational cohesion and strategic coordination across national boundaries. Marx sometimes writes as though the triumph of the working class is inevitable. But at other times he recognizes that failure always remains a possibility, such as when he and Engels assert, in the Communist Manifesto, that the class struggle may result in "the mutual ruin of the contending classes (Marx 2005, 40)." We live in the period following the collapse of the Soviet Union and China's adoption of its unique form of market-driven state capitalism, as well as the conversion of the Western social democratic parties to neoliberalism. From this dismal vantage-point, it may seem that the complexity and difficulty of the tasks the working class must undertake stack the odds against it. But there is no other game in town that has even a remote chance of overturning capitalism, because no other collective actor occupies the position of the working class at the center of the capital accumulation process, and is at the same time so deeply damaged by it.

In Pascal's famous dialogue with the agnostic in his *Pensees*, he makes the point that, given the fact that God's existence is uncertain from a purely epistemic point of view, it is better to believe that he exists than that he does not. If he does exist, and assuming only believers will be saved, those who bet on his existence by believing, or at least acting as if they do, have the chance of winning an infinitely valuable prize. However, those who bet on his nonexistence by refusing to believe have at most the chance of winning a prize, such as uninhibited pleasure, that has a merely finite value. Since infinity exceeds the finite by an infinite degree, the rational gambler will wager that God exists. Contemporary socialists should reformulate Pascal's argument for their own use. The Hungarian Marxist philosopher, Istvan Meszaros, has made the point that, in the age of nuclear weapons and looming ecological disaster, the old motto, "socialism or barbarism" must be revised to read, "socialism or nonexistence." The limitless drive to accumulate capital expresses itself in the profits generated by war as well as the ongoing assault on the ecological capacity of the earth to sustain human life. Meszaros's re-formulation is consonant with the widespread expectation of global ecological disaster, except

that it offers a way out that is more realistic than the quixotic hope that capital accumulation can somehow be tamed. In our period, in particular, capital is conceding nothing that might interfere with the pursuit of maximum profits in the short term, whatever the long term social cost. But the realistic character of socialist transformation and the empty utopianism of reformist strategies must be understood by a workers' movement that bets on the continued existence of our species by betting on the socialist project. Unlike the salvation of the immortal soul in Pascal's argument, the survival of our finite species has a finite value. But it certainly exceeds, in an inestimable way, the disvalue of our disappearance from the universe. One thing is certain. If the working class does not place its bets on critical revolutionary praxis, then it will never take the steps necessary to win a socialist society, even if, in present historical circumstances, such praxis must take the form of a Pascalian wager.

Radical academics and other intellectuals with university educations have played important and sometimes tortured roles in the working-class movement since it first appeared in the early nineteenth century. Marx himself completed a doctorate in philosophy and tried to get a job teaching in the Prussian university system, though his Left Hegelian radicalism made this a pipe dream. Instead he earned a meager living as a newspaper editor and later a free lance journalist. It took nearly a century for socialist intellectuals to find a place in the academic profession, as their prospects advanced in tandem with that of the working-class movement as a whole. The American Association of University Professors was founded in 1915, largely to protect the academic jobs of socialists and other radicals. That was the original purpose of tenure. In France and Italy Marxists came to dominate academia following the end of the Second World War, as the electoral and cultural weight of the French and Italian communist parties increased by leaps and bounds. But the relationship of socialist professors and other socialist intellectuals to the working-class movement was fraught with ambiguities. In general, they were seen and saw themselves as members of the petite bourgeoisie, and with good reason. Until the Second World War, only a tiny percentage of the population received post-secondary educations even in the most affluent countries. The much smaller percentage that went on to academic careers tended to have independent means of support. This is because academic salaries were so low, especially for those at the beginning of their careers, that they had to be supplemented by income deriving from property ownership. Under these circumstances, there was no way to mistake professors for workers. Marxist political leaders, such as Kautsky and Lenin, inveighed against "petite-bourgeois intellectuals," inside and outside the university. But at the same time, they regarded them as indispensible to the socialist movement because their privileged education and expertise enabled them to bring enlightenment to the working class from a position outside of it. This was the origin of the concept of a vanguard that was common to Bolsheviks and Social Democrats. With few exceptions, the intellectuals who were supposed to comprise that vanguard no longer exist.

The working class has come to pitch a very big tent. As most of the labor movement once understood, the working class consists of "wage-slaves," in other words, those who must sell their labor inorder to survive. The word "must" is important, since not everyone who receives a wage (or salary – the difference between the two is irrelevant here) is a member of the working class. If the person possesses capital (such as stocks, bonds, and so on) of a sufficient amount to live without selling labor, then she or he is a member of the class of surplus-extractors, even though the individual happens to work for a wage or salary. Just as it is important not to include in the working class everyone who works for wages, it is equally

important not to limit it to either of two component groups: industrial workers or "productive workers," i.e. those who produce surplus value. A clerical worker in a private for-profit company is a productive worker in this sense, while someone doing the identical job in a government office is not. However, what places the two in the same class is not the common character of their work, but rather the fact that neither possesses the means of production, and so must sell a portion of his or her life (labor-time) in order to survive. The necessity to engage in wage-labor determines the shared life conditions and basic interests that make the working class what it is. Of course, different fractions of the working class have interests that may conflict, including private sector workers and government workers in the example. But as we have seen, a primary goal of critical revolutionary praxis is to reconcile these interests, or at least to get them to take a back seat to the common interests of the class.

Class analysis is complicated by the divide between physical and intellectual work. The division between body and mind did not originate with Descartes in the seventeenth century; it has been with us since the rise of the first class societies. The extraction of an economic surplus from the labor of the direct producers requires two kinds of intellectual activity; the economic direction of the labor process, and creation of the political, legal, and ideological institutions that enforce and legitimate the rule of the dominant class. Historically, most of those engaged in such activities have also been members of the dominant class; slave-owners, lords, jurists, priests, scholars, and the like, although sometimes economic-managerial functions were delegated to other social strata, as was the case with slave overseers in ancient Egypt and Rome. However this may be, the division between intellectual and physical activity was a horizontal line that separated the dominant class from the direct producers. In pre-capitalist class societies, this division was evident in the open distain with which the surplus-extractors regarded physical work.

Under capitalism, however, the horizontal division is supplemented and increasing supplanted by a vertical one. First, there is a distinction within the bourgeoisie between intellectuals who develop the ideologies that legitimate its role as the dominant class, and the practical, often cynical business leaders and politicians who are the movers and shakers of capitalism. In the French Revolution, journalists, jurists, and philosophes as well as bankers and merchants belonged to the bourgeoisie, in spite of their very different roles within that class. Second, in capitalist society, there is a vertical divide within the working class between what used to be called "workers by hand and by brain," by the now excised socialist Clause Four of the British Labour Party Constitution. Workers by hand consisted largely in the traditional industrial working class, while workers by brain included clerical workers, technicians, engineers, school teachers, and so on, i.e. all those whose work consisted principally in cognitive rather than physical activity. If we focus on the two physically active components of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, we can see that there is an historical tendency in capitalism for intellectuals to lose their elevated class position and fall into the working class. Marx and Engels recognized this tendency in the Communist Manifesto when they wrote that the bourgeoisie "has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage laborers (Marx 2005, 49)."

Where do contemporary college and university professors fit in this picture? The answer is they fit in different places. While the role of professor is an occupational category, it designates neither a class, nor an occupation that can be located entirely within a single class. It is still

possible to find professors who conform to the older model of the petite-bourgeois intellectual whose academic salary is supplemented by income derived from property, including inheritance. But more important than this nearly extinct petite-bourgeois stratum are professors, especially in the sciences, who are full-fledged members of the bourgeoisie, thanks to university-based entrepreneurship. For example, many of the tenured science professors at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology are wealthy enough to support themselves and their families without working. Their academic positions have allowed them to develop patents and assemble teams (often including their graduate students) who launch successful start-up companies in computers and biotech. MIT professor of biochemistry, Robert S. Langer seems to have made the largest fortune this way, although there are only rough estimates of his net worth (some say it is around twenty million dollars) (Campana 2014). A handful of science professors from Stanford, UCLA, and Tel Aviv University have acquired fortunes exceeding one billion dollars through business ventures in which their university appointments played a major role. Henry Samueli, former chair of the engineering department at UCLA, has accumulated the largest of these fortunes, estimated at between two and seventeen billion dollars (Qasim 2013). Management schools and departments at many universities also afford tenured professors opportunities to enrich themselves, and even allow parttime faculty with outside careers to expand their networks of business contacts and opportunities for investment. In addition, political science professors, economists, and policy analysts at prestigious institutions have a chance to enter "government service" at the highest levels. There they not only make decisions intended to bolster the rule of the bourgeoisie, but establish business connections enabling them to assume seats with healthy salaries on corporate boards of directors after leaving their government positions. Harvard professor, Henry Kissinger, among others, comes to mind, with a net worth of around ten million dollars. Through their ownership and control of capital, such elite professors continue to belong to the bourgeoisie in contemporary capitalism.

However important this elite stratum of the professoriate is to the culture of some institutions, academic multimillionaires and billionaires are clearly exceptions to the general rule. To begin with, roughly 70% of college and university teachers in the United States consist in part-time and temporary full-time faculty. Some with other careers teach for prestige or to make business or professional connections, although they are a minority. Most of the 50% of faculty members who are part-time work at multiple campuses for very low pay and without health or retirement benefits. The 20% of so-called "adjunct" faculty with full-time jobs work for entry-level pay on short term contracts, sometimes limited by a maximum period of employment. The remaining 30% of the faculty are tenured or on the tenure track, but few have the wealth described in the preceding paragraph. Most have to work in order to make ends meet. What this means, of course, is that the majority of college and university teachers are members of the working-class, since they are compelled by financial need to sell their labor. Unfortunately most – including the misnamed "adjuncts" – do not see themselves this way, nor are they regarded as workers by society as a whole. But the same is true of many K-12 teachers, nurses, engineers, medical technicians, and even clerical workers. The ideology of professionalism, and the widespread tendency to identify workers with the industrial working class are stubborn impediments to class consciousness in these groups as well. But class is determined by relation to the means of production, and workers are workers whether they recognize it or not.

This conclusion is bound to be controversial even among Marxists. Since the 1960s, a great deal of ink has been spilled over the class location of people whose jobs require college or

university credentials, but who, lacking significant income-generating property, must work in order to make a living. Most of those who have written on this are in the very class that is their theme, so the literature on the topic has something of the character of a journey of self-discovery. What complicates the issue is not the existence of cultural differences between the college educated and everyone else – including voting patterns, attitudes to unions, forms of grammar, frequency of visits to museums, and the like. It is all too obvious that the working class in the United States is divided by such cultural factors as region, ethnicity, religion, language, race, and country of citizenship. More problematic is the fact that many whose work requires a college or university credential hold jobs that involve the exercise of command, supervision, and disciplinary control over workers and the unemployed as well as their families. This is certainly true of managers, social workers, schoolteachers, doctors, nurses, psychotherapists, and professors, among others. However, the problem with taking command, supervision, and discipline as markers of class location is that many jobs requiring only high school diplomas or less involve the exercise of these functions; police, prison guards, national guardsmen, foremen, and so on. Hierarchies of command, supervision, and discipline are so pervasive in capitalist society, and penetrate so deeply before arriving at the stratum of those who have no authority at all over others, that they provide no useful criterion for defining class.

It is true that some credentials, such as law degrees, medical degrees, and degrees in computer science afford the opportunity for self-employment. But many formally self-employed professionals are wage-workers disadvantaged by not being covered by existing labor laws. Consulting work is common in software engineering, but consultants, though working on temporary contracts, perform the same tasks as their counterparts with regular, ongoing employment. Doctors and psychotherapists are becoming employees of insurance companies in all but name, and are subject to work evaluations every bit as stringent as those conducted in conventional workplaces. Many lawyers now work for legal temp agencies. Self-employment, which used to be an indication of petite-bourgeois status, has become a mask for wage work without benefits or job security. In his book, *Classes*, the "analytical Marxist" sociologist Eric Olin Wright argued that college and university credentials elevate their possessors above the working class because they are income-generating assets, similar to stocks, bonds, and real estate (Wright 1985). Only, unlike capital assets, credentials generate a surplus income by restricting access to the relevant profession, thereby raising the price of labor above its genuine market value. However, it is a very strange asset indeed that requires the sale of one's own labor in order to be converted into money. Wright's conception of credentials as assets is not that far from the idea of "human capital" in management theory and Chicago School economics. And like that idea, its theoretical implications make it impossible to draw a meaningful distinction between capital and labor. But this means that, if we adopt Wright's conception, we would have to jettison the idea of class, without which there is not much left to Marxism. That is in fact the point of the concept of human capital for Chicago School ideologists, who at least recognize that "rational choice theory," so dear to the hearts of "analytical Marxism," logically ends with no Marxism at all.

Instead of expanding the petite bourgeoisie to include credentialed workers, we might try to arrive at the exclusion of intellectuals from the working class by adopting a restrictive definition of the latter. Limiting the working class to industrial workers would do the trick, but at the price of excluding the millions of people who work for poverty wages as cashiers, home health aids, and fast food servers. We would have to pay a higher price if we adopted an even more

restrictive definition of the working class as productive workers. (The Marxist sociologist, Nicos Poulantzis, argued for this in the 1970s). In either case, we would need to invent a new class category for wage-workers excluded by the definition. But that would be like introducing an ad hoc hypothesis in the natural sciences in order to save a theory, such as the proliferation of epicycles in Ptolemaic astronomy prior to the Copernican Revolution.

The criterion of class from a Marxist point of view is relation to the means of production. In a capitalist society that relation concerns ownership of capital, or the lack of it. The main class division is between those who own sufficient capital to live without working, and those who must sell their labor in order to survive. Marx predicted that the advance of capitalism would progressively eliminate all classes, except the bourgeoisie and proletariat. The common wisdom is that he was wrong about this. When he made the prediction, he was anticipating the disappearance or near-disappearance of peasants and small business owners. Both have diminished significantlyas a percentage of the economically active population in Europe, Japan, and the United States since Marx's death. But, so it is claimed, a new petite bourgeoisie, or expanded middle class, has taken the place of the shrinking non-proletarian classes. The evidence cited is the emergence of new occupations requiring post-secondary degrees. But if the need to engage in wage labor is the defining characteristic of the working class, then Marx's prediction was correct. The majority of the so-called "middle class" in advanced capitalism belongs in reality to the working class. This includes most academics.

Kautsky's and Lenin's idea of a vanguard of socialist intellectuals that brings enlightenment to the working class from without may once have been defensible, but it no longer makes any sense. Most contemporary intellectuals are members of the working class rather than occupying a position outside of it. In Marx's conception, critical revolutionary praxis is the task of the entire working class movement. The significance of the adjective "critical" is that it affirms an intimate bond between theory and praxis. "Criticism" was the Left Hegelian term for philosophy, once it shed its speculative, mystified form. In 1844 Marx wrote a letter to Arnold Ruge in which he advocated "the ruthless criticism of everything that exists." In the same year he called philosophy the head of the revolutionary movement and the proletariat its heart, in the "Introduction" to *The Critique of Hegel's philosophy of Right* (Marx 1977, 142). Though the status of philosophy becomes more problematic in his later work, he never ceases to insist that critique must be joined to the working class movement. When Marx published the first volume of his masterwork, *Capital*, in 1867, he said that he had written the book so workers could read it. In this he was not disappointed. When the future founder and president of the American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers, worked as a cigar maker, he and his fellow workers contributed to pay the wages of one of their number who would read *Capital* out loud while the others rolled cigars. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the worker-intellectual was an established, albeit unusual, figure; Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Wilhelm Weitling are examples. The Kautsky-Lenin idea of an intellectual vanguard located outside the working class preserved the split between theory and praxis, mental and physical activity, intellectual and worker that Marx believed must be overcome in the socialist movement as well as the classless society it seeks to create. Of course, a society without classes can be established only by a long and complicated process. But if socialists do not take the first steps along this path, they will never reach their destination. The alternative is the substitution of intellectuals, including the bureaucratic functionaries of party and state, for the working class as a whole, as the histories of Social Democracy and Leninism have demonstrated. But the historical period

in which these two projects were viable has now come to an end. If it is to have a future, the socialist movement must reinvent itself, and a requirement of reinvention is that it reject substitutionism. The location of most academics and other intellectuals within the working class helps make this possible. So does the massive expansion of the student population.

"Student" is not a class category since it does not designate a relation to the means of production. Instead, students share the class position of their families until they are able to support themselves and thereby determine their own class membership. Yet in spite of the fact that their class location is fluid, students do not exist outside of capitalism. Like workers, they constitute a group that changes in accordance with the dynamic of capital accumulation. In the United States over the course of its existence there have been multiple expansions of the number of students attending colleges and universities in response to the changing needs of capital, and this has had an impact on the class composition of the student population. The history proceeds in three broad phases.

The first phase extends from the founding of colleges in the colonial period until around the time of the Civil War. The main purpose of these early institutions was to educate protestant ministers, who played an important ideological role at the origins of North American capitalism. The ministers were purveyors of what Max Weber called "the protestant ethic," i.e. religious injunctions to postpose gratification in favor of capital accumulation and investment on the one hand and "honest work" on the other. Through their ideological work, they facilitated acquisition of the earliest fortunes as well as the labor discipline necessary to capitalist enterprise.

After the Northern bourgeoisie defeated the Southern slaveocracy in the Civil War, insuring its own political hegemony, it was able to accelerate the pace of industrialization, initiating the second phase in the history of higher education in the United States. The new industrial enterprises needed scientists and technicians, as well as experts in management. Robber barons such as Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie created "nonprofit" foundations that financed expansion of science and management programs. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 52,286 students were enrolled in colleges and universities in 1869-70, just before the end of the Civil War (NCES Historical Summary). The number more than doubled over the course of the next decade. The expansionary trend continued until the outbreak of World War II with 1,494,203 students enrolled in 1939-40. In spite of the growth in the number of students, higher education was still by and large reserved for the children of the bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie. If anything, we may speculate that the Great Depression that closes this period purged the colleges and universities of whatever small number of working class students they had, as young people had to give up aspirations to higher education in order to contribute to the support of their families.

A few years after the war, the student population had increased to 2,659,021, inaugurating the third phase of development, and a fundamental change in the class character of higher education. The initial increase was undoubtedly due to the GI Bill, which not only paid the cost of going to college for discharged veterans, but also provided stipends allowing them to support families while engaging in their studies. These veterans included the first significant influx of working class students into the higher education system. But it was only the beginning of a prolonged and powerful expansion that has not yet run out of steam. The unprecedented economic boom following World War II increased the demand for educated labor – chemists,

engineers, computer specialists, accountants, architects, lawyers, managers and the like – led by the auto, chemical, energy, electronic, and armament industries. The demand was further stimulated when the federal government poured money into scientific education and research after it was beaten by the Soviet Union in the race to put a manned rocket into orbit around the earth. In addition, the massive baby boomer generation needed to be taught, inoculated, have their teeth drilled, and so on, creating a demand for new teachers, doctors, dentists, and other service sector professionals. The GI Bill – renewed by the wars in Korea and Vietnam –, the development of new industries and the growth of old ones, the influx of federal money into the sciences, and the movement of the baby boomers through the educational system combined to result in an unprecedented surge in the student population. The number of college and university students leaped from 3,639,847 in 1959-1960 to 8,004,660 in 1969. Since 1970, the student population has continued to grow – lured in part by the promise of new careers in microelectronics, biotech, and the medical professions – but at a slower pace. In 2011, the latest year for which statistics are available, approximately 21,000,000 students were in colleges and universities. Although comparable figures are not available for 2011, in 2004 nearly 60% of Americans between the ages of 18 and 22 were enrolled in institutions of higher learning.

Sixty percent of any age cohort in the United States is bound to consist of a majority supported by the sale of wage-labor. The bourgeoisie would have to make up more than 30% of the entire population in order for this be otherwise. But only 10% of American families own 80% of corporate stocks ("Wealth Inequality" 2015). We also need to keep in mind the fact that, in 2011, students attending public institutions outnumbered those attending more expensive private ones by a ratio of more than two-and-a-half to one. In the following year, approximately 7.7 million students were enrolled in community colleges, 44% of them from families with incomes less than $25,000 per year (Bellafante 2015). When a comprehensive history of higher education since the end of the Second World War is written, a good title would be *The American Working Class Goes to College*.

Taking into account students, adjunct and most other faculty as well as clerical workers, food service workers, janitors, and technical staff, it follows that the working class constitutes the majority of those involved in the knowledge industry. Of course the proportion of working-class to bourgeois and petite-bourgeois individuals varies in different institutions, diminishing as we move up the scale of prestige, competitiveness of entry, and size of endowment. There are obviously more students and faculty supported by income from capital assets at Harvard and Yale than community colleges. But the most elite institutions comprise only a small segment of higher education, and even they employ many proletarian support staff.

The neoliberal university emerged when the proletarianization of faculty and students was well underway. In the United States, colleges and universities have always been dominated by capital, and, since the Civil War, by capitalist corporations. That is why talk about the recent "corporatization" of the university is misleading. What has happened instead is that the already corporatized university has been absorbed by the neoliberal project, triumphant since the end of the postwar boom. In "affluent" countries (which afford anything but affluence to a good portion of their populations), the postwar boom permitted a class comprise that included steeply progressive income taxes, the welfare state, and the recognition of labor unions as legitimate bargaining agents for workers. In exchange, owners of capital were left in control of investment decisions and the management of work, while acquiring massive consumer markets.

When the long wave of economic decline began in the early 1970s, capital launched a campaign to undo the postwar compromise by making income taxes regressive, dismantling welfare state programs, and provoking strikes, which allowed unionized workers to be fired and their unions decertified. As the working class income that fed consumer markets stagnated or declined, capital turned to debt in order to sustain consumer demand. Secondary markets permitting investment in debt contributed to the dominance of a new form of finance capital. At the same time, national debt and so-called "trade liberalization" (which in actuality allowed the U.S. to continue to protect its markets), enabled finance capital to plunder what used to be called the Third World, and, in the current period, much of Europe as well. Though it looked as though the financial collapse of 200708 might bring the neoliberal epoch to a close, appearances were deceptive. Neoliberalism might have collapsed if there were a project to replace it that was amenable to capital. But capitalists violated the postwar class compromise because the high rates of profit it permitted for a couple of decades came to an end. As the economic devastation of Greece and, to a lesser extent, Spain and Italy demonstrates, neoliberalism is still secure eight years after the crash.

In higher education, neoliberalism has multiple dimensions. 1) State budgetary appropriations for public colleges and universities have sharply declined, leaving students and their families to compensate for the loss in funding with higher tuition and fees. 2) The rising cost of both public and private institutions has resulted in an explosion of student loans and postgraduate debt, now amounting to 1.3 trillion dollars. 3) Private for-profit institutions are conquering a growing part of the higher education market, some specializing in online courses. 4) Many science departments have been transformed into off-site research and development divisions of corporations, while also serving as launching pads for start-up companies in microelectronics and biotech. 5) Colleges and universities have replaced tenure lines with low-paid, non-benefitted adjunct faculty as well as outsourcing food, janitorial, and buildings and grounds services. 6) University administrations increasingly operate on the model of large corporations, regarding students as consumers, hiring corporate head-hunting firms to select candidates for upper level administrative positions, requiring academic presses to show profits, using corporate advertising methods to promote their brands, and creating administrative departments to develop corporation-university partnerships.

The combination of the neoliberal university with a working-class faculty, staff, and student body lays the foundation for class struggles within higher education. These are bound to be somewhat different than the battles fought by the industrial working class, but we should not overstate the difference. Working conditions for faculty, even adjunct faculty, are not nearly as onerous as those factory workers face. The working class ethic of solidarity is at best highly attenuated in universities, except perhaps, among janitors, food service workers, and clerical workers. Also there is no counterpart of the student body in industrial production. But the idea of a "knowledge factory" is more than a rhetorical device. The knowledge produced in universities is a quasi-industrial product, subject to demands for productivity and quantification of output familiar from industrial concerns. This is true not only in the sciences but also in the humanities, where the trend is to evaluate faculty members, not merely on the number of books and articles they publish, but also on the frequency with which their publications are cited in books and articles by other academics. The largest universities hire as many workers as the largest factories did in their heyday, and, like factories, concentrate workers in close proximity to one another. These are preconditions for union organizing on a significant scale. For organizers, universities

actually have an advantage over factories in that they cannot be relocated to low-wage countries as a response to increasing labor costs, which has been a potent weapon in the offensive corporations have waged against the industrial proletariat. Obviously, union struggles do not automatically take on a socialist character, but, without them, there is little chance that socialism will survive, or be anything more than a pleasant dream. When the British Labour Party cut itself loose from its union base, it also expunged the idea of socialism from its constitution.

The socialist Left is miniscule in the United States, so that it may seem ridiculous to consider the possibility of critical revolutionary praxis in colleges and universities, or any other American institution. But American exceptionalism – the failure of the Socialist Party to survive as a real political force much beyond the end of World War I, and the Communist Party beyond the McCarthy era – may actually be an advantage. Most Europeans no longer take the word "socialism" seriously, because of the collapse of the "actually existing socialist" regimes of Eastern Europe, and the fact that the so-called "social democratic" parties of Western Europe (the British Labour Party, the German SPD, the Socialist Party of France, and so on) are now barely distinguishable from parties of the neoliberal Right, especially when the social democrats are in power. In the United States, by contrast, there is a still a relatively clean slate to write on. Moreover, absurd claims by the Tea Party Right that President Obama is a socialist have ironically brought the idea of socialism within the sphere of acceptable political discourse, especially for the young. According to a Pew Research Poll conducted in 2010, 47% of Americans ages 18-29 had a positive view of socialism, while only 43% had a negative view (""Socialism" Not So Negative, "Capitalism" Not So Positive A Political Rhetoric Test" 2010). That was one year before Occupy Wall Street, in which college students and recent graduates were on the front lines.

If young people are more open to socialist ideas now than they have been since the 1960s,as the Sanders presidential campaign clearly shows, then it is possible for socialist faculty to educate and influence them through their teaching. But it is even more important for faculty, students, and staff to engage in joint struggles on behalf of their common interests, since socialist theory is meaningful only when it has an organic connection with transformative practice. In the context of practical struggles, professors have no advantage, and are sometimes at a pronounced disadvantage, with respect to the rest of the working class. Many have difficulty thinking of themselves as workers even when unionized, and yet more difficulty engaging in strikes and other forms of collective action. There is a vast distance that separates the careerist individualism of academia from the working class ethics of solidarity. These professorial deficits can be rectified when students, staff, and faculty are in combative motion, but only if the distinction between teachers and taught becomes multidirectional. Unionized janitors have something to teach faculty members about how to get truckers to observe picket lines, and students are better than faculty at using social media as a tool of mobilization. In the academy above all, "the educators must be educated."

On the other hand, socialist faculty are presumably good at theory, or at least they could be if they addressed their work to audiences beyond their colleagues. Like adopting the ethic of solidarity, it would require a revolution in the culture of academia for professors to break out of the insularity of peer-reviewed journals and books published by academic presses. With the exception of knowledge that can be turned into profit, academic publishing is generally a self-referential endeavor in which experts address a handful of other experts. It may be possible for

socialist intellectuals to make some progress in the development of knowledge this way, but it is far more likely to result in the reduction of socialism, especially in its Marxist form, to an academic genre, provided academic institutions tolerate it at all. A good part of the crop of Marxist academics produced by the radicalization of the1960s found it necessary to rewrite their resumes when the radical wave subsided. Part of the attraction of postmodernism is that it permitted erstwhile Marxists to convince themselves that they were still radicals, while enabling them to get jobs and win tenure, at least in the humanities. Of course, not all socialist academics hopped on the postmodernist bandwagon or overtly moved to the Right in order to advance their careers. And some of those who did not found ways of reaching working-class audiences. Socialists teaching in labor studies programs are especially well-placed in this respect, though the number of such programs has declined along with the decline in union membership. A handful of established figures has been able to reach large audiences outside their institutions with theoretical work, including Chomsky, Zizek, Brenner, and Harvey, but this is a very small and select group. A new campus-based workers' movement would give less famous socialist intellectuals the chance to connect their theoretical work with transformative practice in their own backyards.

In the space that remains in this article, I can only sketch the outlines of a possible campus-based socialist project. It should already be clear from the preceding discussion that it would need to operate in the context of a larger working-class movement that includes students, staff, and faculty. But while participating in union struggles for immediate gains, socialists would have to insist on the limitations of ameliorative measures, since what capital gives today it can always take back tomorrow. The only way to improve the lives of workers in the long run is to move beyond amelioration to fundamental social transformation. Outside the horizon of socialism, there can be no solution to capitalist crises, and to the fact that workers are made to pay for them.

In making this point, it is important to be able to specify institutional structures capable of realizing the socialist goal of an economy, polity, and culture created and controlled by the vast majority of society. Marx once wrote that he was not in the business of writing recipes for the cook shops of the future. But since his death, more than one restaurant has opened that had to be condemned. No one is going to risk very much so that the Soviet Union or the (no longer) "actually existing socialist" regimes of Eastern Europe can be resurrected. An important task of intellectuals is to specify what a socialist society might look like that avoids the substitution of a bureaucratic apparatus, or worse, a Great Leader, for the working class as the dominant force in society. This would involve attaining clarity about the relationship between planning and limited forms of market exchange (probably unavoidable for the foreseeable future); the forms that social ownership of the means of production might take (such as national, municipal, regional, and cooperative ownership); the range of disparities in wages and salaries that a socialist society is willing to tolerate; the institutional arrangements required for workers' control of the workplace; and the political institutions necessary to get beyond the elitist, manipulated character of bourgeois democracy, while preserving and extending its limited, but nonetheless real, protection of civil liberties. In contrast with most other workplaces, colleges and universities offer venues where an appealing and viable image of a socialist society can be developed, including lecture courses, seminars, forums, and so forth.

In order to engage in this theoretical task, socialists would have to organize as socialists and not just as socialist faculty. Students and staff have contributions to make in developing an image of socialism, just as the entire working class must contribute to refining the image and making it something real. But socialists will also need to be organized so they can constitute an openly socialist bloc in a broader campus-based workers' movement. The form such a movement takes would vary from campus to campus.

Unions are the primary vehicles of working-class struggles occurring on the job. But unions should be understood in the broadest sense, and not limited to collective bargaining agents certified by federal or state labor laws. A union is any group of workers at a workplace who come together to frame common demands, and win them through collective action. In this sense, a union need not establish itself by winning a majority vote under the supervision of a labor board. There is also no need for it to accept no-strike agreements, or even to sign contracts. With the recent passage of right-to-work laws in once heavily unionized parts of the Midwest, even the mainstream labor movement is considering the viability of minority unions that work without the imprimatur of labor boards. Where no union represents a group of workers at a college or university, socialists should attempts to organize one, whether or not it is officially certified.

Where different unions representing different bargaining units exist on campus, socialists ought to advocate the creation of a labor council, a regular meeting of representatives from the unions, open to the attendance and participation of rank-and-file members. The purpose of a campus labor council would be to coordinate the struggles of its member unions by developing common demands and support for each others' campaigns. It could also develop a long-term agenda, perhaps in the form of a workers' and students' bill of rights. It is important to give undergraduate and graduate students a place on the council, since it ought to represent the interests of all working-class people on campus, including those not represented by unions. A labor council could also encourage students to create student unions, like the ones that led the successful strike in Quebec in 2012 against increases in tuition and fees. As a general rule, student unions are more militant and democratic than conventional student governments, many of which are dominated by administrators and aspiring career politicians.

Radical democracy is not a substitute for socialism, as Habermas and others have claimed, but it must lie at the core of any movement that seeks to achieve socialism through the emancipation of the working class. Emancipation would be hollow unless the working class majority had the collective power, on the basis of one person, one vote, to determine the structure and direction of society by making binding decisions. This principle must be observed first of all within working-class institutions. Assuming the existence of a labor council on campus, socialists should work to implement democracy in each of its member unions on the basis of such principles as open competitive election of union officials, rank-and-file determination of bargaining agendas, membership ratification of contracts, the right to form minority caucuses, rank-and-file access to union financial records, and so on. Activists should engage in campaigns to include adjunct faculty in university governance, and to strengthen governance rights for all faculty so they go beyond pro forma consultation. They should also work to create equivalent powers of governance (otherwise known as self-management) for students and staff. With respect to students, there is a precedent for this in Wisconsin's state statute 36.09(5), which grants students in the Wisconsin University system the right "to be active participants in the immediate governance of and policy development for [each campus]. As such, students shall have the

primary responsibility for the formulation and review of policies concerning student life, services, and interests."

Struggles over the redistribution of power from the administrative pinnacle to organs of direct worker and student democracy have more radical implications than conventional struggles over pay and benefits. However, pay and benefit struggles can also have radical implications when based on the principle of leveling up. Priority should be given to improving the well-being of those on the bottom of the pay and benefits scale. The council should seek more for everyone, but more for the bottom than the top, in the interest of moving in the direction of an egalitarian distribution of economic resources – thus more for janitors than faculty, more for adjunct faculty than tenured faculty, etc. Short of this, negotiations over lump sum wage and salary increases have greater egalitarian impact than percentage increases, which actually widen existing disparities. According to Marx, a complete leveling is neither possible nor desirable, even in advanced communism, because people have unequal needs, and therefore should have access to unequal resources. But we are far from that stage of social development. More to the point, given the extreme and growing disparities in income distribution in neoliberal capitalism, any move toward greater income equality in accordance with the principal of solidarity would have beneficial effects on the unity and fighting capacity of the working class.

Universities are not at the center of society, but they are not at its periphery either. First of all, they are places where people work, including students with work-study jobs, no different in this respect from other workplaces. Second, like K-12 schools, they are loci of the reproduction of labor-power to the extent that they foster development of the knowledge, skills, and work habits required for some forms of labor. Third they are sources of capital accumulation through university-corporation partnerships, outsourced research and development activities, creation of start-up companies, and investment in stocks and bonds, real estate deals, and other business ventures. Fourth, they are facilities for the production of knowledge, though this is often tied up with the production of ideologies justifying the existing social order. Each of these functions provide opportunities for socialists to analyze, agitate, organize, and act in such a way as to weaken capital, while raising the prospect of a social order based, not on profit-making as an end in itself, but on the satisfaction of needs and the development of human powers and sensibilities. However, the university as a place of work and reproduction of labor power must take precedence in the creation of a campus-based workers movement in which socialists can express their ideas and exert their influence, for these are the functions through which labor power is directed, exploited, and augmented in value.

Socialists would have to distinguish themselves as the most effectively militant fighters for the common interests of their class as represented by the council and other organs of direct democracy, while emphasizing that no definitive solution to the problems workers and students face is possible within the framework of capitalism. Struggles should seek to achieve concrete improvements in worker and student conditions while pointing beyond what institutions of higher learning are able to concede in a capitalist society.

There are two steps that labor councils can take that would broaden the movement beyond particular campuses. The first is to federate into larger associations on a municipal, regional, and national basis. Municipal and regional federations are particularly important because they would be in a position to establish master agreements that set minimum

acceptable contractual standards at all institutions within the municipality or region. This would enable them to leverage labor markets in the interest of workers. The second step is to bring workers' struggles into the political arena through the use of ballot referenda. Referenda are instruments of direct democracy, though they are distorted by the ability of capital to dominate political advertising. But labor has resources of its own, including money and volunteers who can work phone banks and go door to door. Unless and until a genuine socialist party emerges, referenda campaigns are far more promising than engagement in party politics. The approach to critical revolutionary practice in colleges and universities that I have sketched in this article may appear hopelessly old-fashioned to many on the Left. In particular it is liable to elicit objections from advocates of identity politics. They are apt to see in it a working class essentialism that marginalizes the struggles of women, racial minorities, LGBT people, the disabled, and other oppressed groups. But this is not a logical implication of the position I have been arguing. There is no denying that an emancipated society requires more than the empowerment of people as workers. It would also need to oppose the subordination of some members of society to others on the basis of characteristics that distinguish the two groups, but are irrelevant to defensible social purposes, such as rearing children or maintaining military discipline. In spite of their numerous warts, Marxists and other socialists have an honorable history of supporting the struggles of all the excluded and oppressed. The point remains, however, that workers' struggles are the only ones capable of getting beyond capitalism, for the simple reason that labor is the creator of capital and its continuing prerequisite. The present and future disasters caused by the limitless imperative to accumulate capital – including imperialist war, millions of deaths in the global South from avoidable disease and starvation, and the threat of ecological collapse as well as nuclear holocaust – have no remedy short of the emancipation of the working class that would bring capitalism to an end.

Colleges and universities are now more integrated into the capital accumulation process than at any time in the past. One aspect of integration is their participation in the debt mechanism fundamental to the neoliberal project. Students will shoulder the growing burden of college debt by taking jobs after graduation unrelated to their majors and often requiring no college degree. According to Forbes magazine, 42% of college graduates between the ages of 22 and 27 are in jobs that require no more than a high school diploma, and we do not yet know whether this is a transient effect of the Great Recession or the indelible face of the future (Shin 2015). Graduates are also postponing home purchases and starting families later because of low wages and the need to pay interest on their college loans. There is no way capitalism can satisfy the career and life aspirations of the majority of Americans who now pass through the system of higher education. The result is a potentially explosive situation, since, according to polling, belief in the financial benefits of higher education is the only pillar that remains of the American Dream. The form that explosion takes – whether of despair and self-blame or rational concerted action – will depend upon the willingness and ability of former students to create organs of collective struggle. Experiences of organizing as undergraduates as well as socialist ideas encountered in classes have a chance of encouraging graduates – along with the 50% of students who do not make it to graduation – to engage in critical revolutionary praxis in their adult working lives. An obvious expression of such praxis is the emergence – now in its early stages – of a movement for mass default on a debt that has become unsustainable.

It is important to educate students about the nature of college debt and the emerging default movement since, after graduation, they will no longer be in close physical proximity to one

another. This means reflecting on the role higher education plays in the exploitation of students, a theme that is difficult for even socialist academics to consider since it involves their complicity. It also raises the issue of whether a college education is really necessary for the 21 million students who are now enrolled. When I ask my students how many would be in college if they could get the job they wanted immediately, only a small percentage of the entire class raises their hands. For most students, college has become a very expensive and extended job training program. But with some obvious exceptions, such as nursing, what is learned in college has very little relevance to work. Most college graduates are trained on the job. Employers are clear about this, at least in human resource trade journals, expressing a preference for college graduates only because they believe them more likely to accept labor discipline than workers without degrees. The number of students enrolled in majors has little to do with employment opportunities in the related fields. Industry associations advocate, often successfully, for the expansion of departments (computer science is an example) even when there is a glut in the job market. The reason, of course, is that unemployment among those "qualified" for a job keeps downward pressure on wage rates. Marx pointed this out in *Capital* in his theory of "the reserve army of the unemployed." Unemployment is not an aberration in the capitalist system, as even mainstream economists now recognize. It is essential to the imperative of profit maximization that drives the system. Colleges and universities make their contribution to maximum profits by overproducing educated labor, as witnessed by the fact that enrollments continued to increase as official unemployment rates grew to more than 10% during the Great Recession.

There is a difference between job consciousness and class consciousness. It is understandable that workers cling to their jobs under capitalism, however baleful their impact on other people and the environment, since jobs are the only access they have to the means of survival. But a great deal of work in capitalist society is useless or destructive. Class consciousness involves a commitment to workingclass emancipation which demands a root and branch transformation of the economy, including its occupational structure. There are many jobs that would be eliminated in the transition to a socialist society. For example, millions of people employed by the advertising and insurance industries would have to be provided with other work, as would much of the military, the police, and those working in state security agencies. The same may be true of the majority of academics. We will have to rethink what it means to be an intellectual as well as how to organize education over the course of a lifetime, much of it integrated with work, and some of it pursued during what we now call leisure. Colleges and universities will not survive in their current form, but this is not a tragedy. Marx was not a professor. Neither was Dante, Shakespeare, Spinoza, Darwin, Frederick Douglass, or Virginia Wolff. The life of the mind will survive the end of the capitalist university, just as it existed before the latter appeared. In a socialist society, a rich intellectual life will be available to greater numbers of people than ever before, and less isolated from the other activities that command the attention of human beings.

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