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Education Agonistes: an epistle to the transnational capitalist class^[1]

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ABSTRACT This article examines the current crisis of neoliberal capitalism and globalized imperialism from the perspective of a Marxist-humanist approach to pedagogy known as ‘revolutionary critical pedagogy’. It is written as an epistle 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 serves to reproduce it at the peril of both students and humanity as a whole.

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 gorgonizes 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. 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 pock-marked cultural skin of our consumer culture. Thousands of Miley Cyrus addicts whose lives turn on one of her accidentally on purpose wardrobe malfunctions 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. 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 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 an incubus – 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, neo-liberal 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.

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. 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 class-based 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 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 unmourned 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 as much as the structural violence of capitalist inequality, 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. 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 pettifoggery, the 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. 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, during these years of prosperity, creating a democracy embrative 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.

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.

Current political crises can be traced to the logic of capital, its prickly handmaiden called imperialism, and blundering geopolitical statecraft. Take the situation in Ukraine at the time of this writing, where darkness has begun to preponderate, but also an awakening that has occurred with respect to the false choices available to countries whose populations have risked much in rising up against corruption and oppression. On the one hand, the fascists have made themselves very present, hanging the US Confederate flag inside Kiev's occupied City Hall, as well as displaying Nazi SS and white power symbols over a toppled statue of V.I. Lenin. Playing a substantial role in the revolution is the far-right party Svoboda, a group linked to the Alliance of European National Movements (a constellation of neo-fascist parties) whose original logo resembled a swastika with the superimposed 'I-N' (standing for 'Idea Natsii' or 'Idea of the Nation'). The leader of Svoboda, Oleh Tyahnybok, has been criticized for his attack on the 'Moscow/Jewish mafia ruling Ukraine' and 'the Moskali [Russians], Germans, Kikes and other scum who wanted to take away our Ukrainian state' (Naureckas, 2014). In 2005, one of Tyahnybok's advisors set up the Joseph Goebbels Political Research Center. Tyahnybok himself had declared Nazi death camp guard John Demjanjuk a hero, after his conviction in 2010 of his role in the death of nearly 30,000 people at the Sobibór camp. There is also the ultra-nationalist movement Right Sector, whose skinhead members claim to be defending the 'values of white, Christian Europe against the loss of the nation and deregionalization' (Naureckas, 2014), and who promise to fight 'against degeneration and

totalitarian liberalism, for traditional national morality and family values' (Blumenthal, 2014). (Right Sector's leader, Oleksandr Muzychko, also known as Sashko Bilyi, was killed recently in a shoot-out with state police.) In the Euromaidan, fascists destroyed a memorial to Ukrainians who died battling German occupation during the Second World War (Blumenthal, 2014). Yale Professor Timothy Snyder (2014) downplays the role of the fascists in the Ukraine opposition and argues that it is mainly the Ukrainian regime, rather than its opponents, that resorts to anti-Semitism, 'instructing its riot police that the opposition is led by Jews'. Glen Ford (2014), African American activist and editor of the *Black Agenda Report*, makes a damning case for the role of Ukrainian fascists in the current protests – which he traces historically to the roles played by the 'Ukrainian Waffen SS units and concentration camp guards that eagerly joined Hitler's genocidal rampage in the mid-20th century' – as emulating the fascism of the pre-Civil War US southern states, serviced by the Democratic Party at that time, a national white man's party with ethnic purity serving as its organizing principle from the mid 1870s to the mid 1960s. (It will likely come as a surprise to students in the United States that slavery was abolished in most nations throughout the Americas a half-century before it was abolished in the United States.) He also likens this fascist ideology to the 'Dixie-born Ku Klux Klan' and to the blood-soaked US ideology of Manifest Destiny, symbolized by President Teddy Roosevelt's world tour by the Great White Fleet. (Roosevelt painted the hulls of the naval vessels white, and Ford claims that both Europe and the non-white world understood his meaning.)

Svoboda members honor the legacy of Stepan Andriyovych Bandera, a Second World War-era Nazi collaborator who led the pro-fascist Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN-B) – the OUN-B managed to successfully change the name of Peace Street to the name of the Nachtigall Battalion, an OUN-B wing that participated directly in the Holocaust (Blumenthal, 2014). Ukrainian nationalists revere Bandera as a legendary freedom fighter, after he participated in a campaign to assassinate Ukrainians who supported accommodation with the Polish during the 1930s. In 2010, Ukrainian President Victor Yushchenko posthumously bestowed on Bandera the dubious state honor of 'Hero of Ukraine'. Bandera's forces set out to ethnically cleanse western Ukraine of Poles in 1943 and 1944, murdering over 90,000 Poles and many Jews (Blumenthal, 2014). After the war, Bandera advocated a totalitarian, ethnically pure Europe. Blumenthal notes the connections between the OUN-B and the Republican Party in the USA. Blumenthal chillingly elucidates the details:

Many surviving OUN-B members fled to Western Europe and the United States – occasionally with CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] help – where they quietly forged political alliances with right-wing elements. 'You have to understand, we are an underground organization. We have spent years quietly penetrating positions of influence,' one member told journalist Russ Bellant, who documented the group's resurgence in the United States in his 1988 book, 'Old Nazis, New Right, and the Republican Party.'

In Washington, the OUN-B reconstituted under the banner of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA), an umbrella organization comprised of 'complete OUN-B fronts,' according to Bellant. By the mid-1980's, the Reagan administration was honeycombed with UCCA members, with the group's chairman Lev Dobriansky, serving as ambassador to the Bahamas, and his daughter, Paula, sitting on the National Security Council. Reagan personally welcomed Stetsko, the Banderist leader who oversaw the massacre of 7000 Jews in Lviv, into the White House in 1983.

'Your struggle is our struggle,' Reagan told the former Nazi collaborator. 'Your dream is our dream.' ...

Following the demise of Yanukovich this month, the UCCA helped organize rallies in cities across the US in support of the EuroMaidan protests. When several hundred demonstrators marched through downtown Chicago, some waved Ukrainian flags while others proudly flew the red and black banners of the UPA [Ukrainian Insurgent Army] and OUN-B. 'USA supports Ukraine!' they chanted. (Blumenthal, 2014)

The mention of Reagan in the above quotation by Blumenthal is chillingly reminiscent of Reagan's welcoming of Taliban leaders to the White House and proclaiming them as no different than America's Founding Fathers, and, earlier, his support for Nicaragua's Contra leaders as American-style heroes (heroes yes, if you want to consider Lieutenant William Calley Jr from Charlie

Company of the 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 11th Brigade of the 23rd Infantry Division, a hero). On the other hand, when you examine the Russian alternative, things look equally as despairing. You have, for instance, the Eurasian Union, championed by Putin and ideologically stabilized by the logic of National Bolshevism; an attraction to the ideas of Nazi political theorist Carl Schmitt; and a wide array of ideological forces supporting the division and colonization of Ukraine (Snyder, 2014). Russia's radical nationalism is replete with a virulent anti-Semitism, a logic of ethnic purification, and a virtual campaign against gays and lesbians, and it is disturbingly ironic that it is they that call the opposition fascists. It is like the pot calling the kettle black.

We can admire Ukraine's citizen activists – teachers, trade unionists, socialists – fighting the oligarch-financed political parties and striving for a multi-ethnic solidarity. But the two choices they have, Greeman (2014) argues, seem chilling to even contemplate: between the USA and Europe, which seek a strong central Ukraine government made up of Ukraine opposition forces capable of imposing an International Monetary Fund-style austerity program on the citizenry and eternal debt servitude to the German banks, and a neo-Stalinist dictatorship, courtesy of Russia. Greeman writes:

The Ukrainian demonstrators, like Occupy and the *Indignados* ... reject the corrupt, entrenched, oligarch-financed political parties who are trying to patch together a new government in a Parliament (whose doors are carefully guarded by citizen defense forces). They have no more use for the leaders of what the media call the 'opposition' than they did for Yanukovich. Their contempt echoes the Argentinian masses whose street protests unseated a series of governments in the early 2000s: *¡Qué se vayan todos!* ('Throw ALL the bums out!'). They have in their memory the lived experience of 2004, when their mass occupations precipitated a previous democratic revolution, rapidly hijacked by corrupt politicians and billionaire oligarchs. They are not prepared to be bilked a second time, and they have so far had the good sense to remain armed, organized and vigilant. (Greeman, 2014)

According to Greeman (2014), most of the protesters are 'people of all classes and all ethnicities, including not just native speakers of Russian and Ukrainian, but also Moslems, Jews, and various nationalities of the Caucasus'. Yet the specter of fascism remains strong, hanging in the atmosphere like tear gas. Greeman writes:

As Victor Serge observed during the failed German Revolution of 1923, the rise of fascism depends on two factors: 1) despair among the active, youthful, combative elements of society of a liberal or communist solution to capitalism's problems, and 2) the backing of big capital and the military.

To me, the ultimate outcome largely depends [on] popular struggles and solidarity on the international scene. The potential tragedy of the Ukrainian revolution (and indeed *mutatis mutandis* of all the 'successful' popular uprisings since 2011 from Egypt on) is that confined to the national context the political leadership gets taken over or overtaken by a rival section of the local ruling class (military, religious, nationalist), normally backed by a rival imperialism. We have seen this happen twice in Egypt, just as we have seen Syria's original citizen uprising for human and democratic rights turned into a reactionary military holocaust with the interference of at least five imperialisms, secular and religious, world-wide and regional.

The one thing all these conflicting bourgeois interests have in common is the will to defeat and destroy the popular, democratic uprisings, which, if allowed to come to power, would inevitably, being majoritarian, demand more social equality and thus threaten the interests of the rich and power elites. Such a successful revolution would set a very 'bad' example for the planet's billions. (Greeman, 2014)

Given this daunting world-historical scenario, what should we make of those risking life and limb for liberation in Egypt, Turkey, Russia, Brazil, Spain, Greece and other countries? Greeman proclaims:

Do we not, at the least, owe them a duty of international solidarity? Must we not follow the example of Egyptian Teachers' Union showing support to the teachers occupying the Wisconsin State House in 2011? Of our worldwide support for the Zapatistas' unlikely uprising a decade earlier? Did not our own organization, *Praxis*, present in Kiev and the Crimea since 2004, grow out of such a network in the 90s? Such networks of support and exchange are the seeds from

which international solidarity can grow, indeed, that revolutions can spread, as they must if they are to survive.

Like Serge, indeed like every socialist from the First International on up, I have always believed that revolutionary movements can only succeed when they become international, and today, with capitalist globalization, that means planetary. Indeed, only a planetary uprising against capitalism can save the planet from industrialized eco-cide in the very near future. Our only chance is to rise up together in one long 'rolling revolution;' and today we can actually create such solidarity in real time thanks to the World Wide Web, social media, alternate media and machine translation.

Planetary revolution? One chance in a hundred! Maybe, but what if there is no other survival solution for the planet's inhabitants? (Greeman, 2014)

I agree with Greeman's call for planetary revolution. But the planetary revolution which I would support would likely be found disturbing to Hunter Biden, the son of US Vice President Joe Biden, who was recently put on the Board of Directors of Burisma, the largest private gas producer in Ukraine. 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 García 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 non-toxic 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 4800 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 waste-water 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).

Ramón 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 claim 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; Monzó & 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 (Monzó & McLaren, 2014).

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 Amílcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara and Hugo Chávez, Subcomandante 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 anti-authoritarians 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.

In *Cyberpunks: 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 defies '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 whistle-blowers, 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 Christ's sake.

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 fly*. (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 Sololá; or the failed coup against the Venezuelan government of Hugo Chávez 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 Cristóbal de las Casas, Las Margaritas, Altamirano, Oxchuc, Huixtán, Chanal and Ocosingo, and involved Tzotzils, Tzeltals, Tojolabals, Chols, Mams and Zoques.

What is of most concern in teacher education programs is not the impact that neo-liberal capitalism has had on the way the USA deals with questions of public and foreign policy, and the implications of this for developing a critical approach to citizenship. What occupies the curricula in teacher education is the question of race and gender and sexual identity formations. And while, in itself, this is an important emphasis, identity formation is rarely problematized against the backdrop of social class and poverty, and the history of US imperialism. I do not want to downplay the importance of the struggles over race and class or gender or sexuality, and the history of the civil rights struggle. But I believe that it is necessary to see such antagonisms both in relationship to a geopolitics of knowledge and in terms of the ways in which capitalism has reconstituted itself over the years.

When I introduce the topic of finance capitalism to my classes and stress the importance of class struggle in my work with teachers, students prefer to use the term 'classism' or 'socio-economic status', as if these terms were equivalent to racism and sexism and heterosexism, for instance. They see no reason to prioritize class in what they refer to as their 'intersectionality' grid. I have found a quotation by Joel Kovel that helps my students understand why class is a very special category. I will use this quotation in full:

This discussion may help clarify a vexing issue on the left, namely, as to the priority of different categories of what might be called 'dominative splitting' – chiefly, those of gender, class, race, ethnic and national exclusion, and, with the ecological crisis, species. Here we must ask, priority in relation to what? If we intend prior in *time*, then gender holds the laurel – and, considering how history always adds to the past rather than replacing it, would appear as at least a trace in all further dominations. If we intend prior in *existential* significance, then that would apply to whichever of the categories was put forward by immediate historical forces as these are lived by masses of people: thus to a Jew living in Germany in the 1930s, anti-semitism would have been searingly prior, just as anti-Arab racism would be to a Palestinian living under Israeli domination today, or a ruthless, aggravated sexism would be to women living in, say, Afghanistan. As to which is *politically* prior, in the sense of being that which whose transformation is practically more urgent, that depends upon the preceding, but also upon the deployment of all the forces active in a concrete situation ...

If, however, we ask the question of *efficacy*, that is, which split sets the others into motion, then priority would have to be given to class, for the plain reason that class relations entail the state as an instrument of enforcement and control, and it is the state that shapes and organizes the splits that appear in human ecosystems. Thus class is both logically and historically distinct from other forms of exclusion (hence we should not talk of 'classism' to go along with 'sexism')

and 'racism,' and 'species-ism'). This is, first of all, because class is an essentially man-made category, without root in even a mystified biology. We cannot, in other words, imagine a human world without gender distinctions – although we can imagine a world without domination by gender. But a world without class is eminently imaginable – indeed, such was the human world for the great majority of our species' time on earth, during all of which considerable fuss was made over gender. Historically, the difference arises because 'class' signifies one side of a larger figure that includes a state apparatus whose conquests and regulations create races and shape gender relations. Thus there will be no true resolution of racism so long as class society stands, inasmuch as a racially oppressed society implies the activities of a class-defending state. Nor can gender inequality be legislated away so long as class society, with its state, demands the super-exploitation of woman's labor.

Class society continually generates gender, racial, ethnic oppressions, and the like, which take on a life of their own, as well as profoundly affecting the concrete relations of class itself. It follows that class politics must be fought out in terms of all the active forms of social splitting. It is the management of these divisions that keeps state society functional. Thus though each person in a class society is reduced from what s/he can become, the varied reductions can be combined into the great stratified regimes of history – this one becoming a fierce warrior, that one a routine-loving clerk, another a submissive seamstress, and so on, until we reach today's personifications of capital and captains of industry. Yet no matter how functional a class society, the profundity of its ecological violence ensures a basic antagonism which drives history onward. History is the history of class society – because no matter how modified, so powerful a schism is bound to work itself through to the surface, provoke resistance (i.e. 'class struggle'), and lead to the succession of powers. (Kovel, 2002, pp. 123-124)

While critical revolutionary pedagogy has made unwonted inroads into some tributaries of mainstream educational studies, it largely remains underappreciated, not so much for the pamphleteering exuberance that marks its tone, but for the fact that it has not been able to make successful inroads into public education. Yet such a failure is not due to the fact that critical pedagogy has chosen to remain in the stance of the 'outsider', refusing to collaborate with those adjacent conceptual and pedagogical systems that are its most eligible neighbors in the social sciences and humanities, but rather because it cannot exist *in situ* within the public education system and still remain true to its principles. This is because it is fundamentally a pedagogy of class struggle, carried out through multiple modalities – anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-homophobic education, critical disability studies, etc. And the fact that each instantiation of critical pedagogy is traversed by the personal predilections of its exponents has given it an eclectic rather than systematic feel. In its current phase of theoretical gestation, there is a lack of univocal, reliable terminology. For now, it remains a pedagogy of hope, which does not mean that it must remain at a fierce remove from the everyday struggle for school reform. Critical pedagogy is still in its early birth pangs, and that it grows stronger the more its deficiencies are named only demonstrates that it is destined for longevity, and that such longevity is not fated to dissipate its native strength.

We do more than embrace the Geist of solidarity; we work towards its world-historical attainment in the pursuit of truth. A commitment to truth is never unproductive because no transformative act can be accomplished without commitment. No true act of commitment is an exit from the truth, but tramps down a path along which truth is won (Fischman & McLaren, 2005). I do not want to use my political imagination to create something new out of the debris of the old, because that leads us to adapt our revolutionary work to that which already exists. My concern is to struggle to change the conditions of what already exists and to liberate agency for its own conditions of possibility in order to create what was thought to be impossible.

Acknowledging fully the asymmetrical relations of power encapsulated in the uneven and combined development pervading the global South in relationship to the global North – a relation of extreme violence so necessary for us, as Western consumers, to enjoy our relatively middle-class lifestyles – we nevertheless struggle for something that is akin to Agamben's 'non-state' or humanity, through a Gramscian attempt at a war of position, a Freirean praxis of conscientization or the permanent revolution found in Raya Dunayevskaya's philosophy of praxis grounded in 'absolute negativity', and an ecological general strike of which the environmental caucus of the Industrial Workers of the World now speaks.

We look at the potential of the communal councils of the Bolivarian Revolution, which serve as public pedagogical sites for socialism and endogenous development, and to what Michael Lebowitz (2013) describes as ‘a vehicle for changing both circumstances and the protagonists themselves’, and deepening the struggle for socialism for the twenty-first century. Such a struggle is founded on revolutionary practice, famously described by Lebowitz (2013) as ‘the simultaneous changing of circumstances and self-change’. The new socialist society stresses that the control of production is vested in the producing individuals themselves. Productive relations are social as a result of conscious choice and not after the fact. They are social because, as Lebowitz (2013) perceptively notes, as a people we deliberately choose to produce for people who need what we can produce.

I do not want to diabolize reformists in the name of revolutionary socialism or give oxygen to any crude sectarianism, for that would be akin to echoing the sentiments of Martin Luther, who argued that, for the man who does not believe in Christ, not only are all sins mortal, but even his good works are sins.

A New Epistemological Alternative

To look mainly to the European social tradition for guidance in the belief that the struggle for a socialist alternative to capitalism is the monopoly of the West would be to succumb to the most crude provinciality and a truncated ethnocentrism. Thomas Fatheuer (2011) has examined recent innovative aspects in the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia. In Ecuador, for instance, the right to a ‘good life’ – *buen vivir* – becomes a central objective, a bread-and-butter concern that cannot be relinquished. One of the subsections of the constitution deals with the rights to nutrition, health, education and water, for example. The concept of the good life here is more than economic, social and cultural rights. It is a basic principle that ‘forms the foundation of a new development model (*régimen de desarrollo*)’ (Fatheuer, 2011, p. 16). Article 275 states: ‘*Buen Vivir* requires that individuals, communities, peoples and nations are in actual possession of their rights and exercise their responsibilities in the context of interculturalism, respect for diversity and of harmonious coexistence with nature’ (cited in Fatheuer, 2011, p. 16). Fatheuer distinguishes the concept of *buen vivir* from the Western idea of prosperity as follows:

Buen Vivir is not geared toward ‘having more’ and does not see accumulation and growth, but rather a state of equilibrium as its goal. Its reference to the indigenous world view is also central: its starting point is not progress or growth as a linear model of thinking, but the attainment and reproduction of the equilibrium state of *Sumak Kausay*. (Fatheuer, 2011, p. 16)

Both Bolivia and Ecuador have utilized their constitutions to re-establish their states in a post-colonial context and are committed to the concept of plurinationalism and the preservation of nature. Here, the state promotes the ethical and moral principles of pluralistic society:

amaqhilla, ama llulla, ama suwa (do not be lazy, do not lie, do not steal), *suma qamaña* (*vive bien*), *ñandereko* (*vida armoniosa* – harmonious life), *teko kavi* (*vida buena*), *ivi maraei* (*tierra sin mal* – Earth without evil, also translated as ‘intact environment’), and *qhapaj ñan* (*Camino o vida noble* – the path of wisdom). (Fatheuer, 2011, pp. 17-18)

The concept of *Pachamama* (‘Mother Earth’) and the rights of nature play a special role, designed to put human beings and nature on a foundation of originality, mutuality and dialogue, and the Defensoría de la Madre Tierra statute is designed to ‘monitor the validity, promotion, dissemination and implementation of the rights of *Madre Tierra*’, and forbid the marketing of Mother Earth (Fatheuer, 2011, p. 18). Here it is stipulated that the earth has a right to regenerate itself. It is important to point out that *buen vivir* is not a return to ancestral, traditional thinking, but is a type of *ch’ixi*, or a concept where something can exist and not exist at the same time – in other words, a third state where modernity is not conceived as homogeneous, but as *cuidadania*, or ‘difference’; a biocentric world view that permits the simultaneous existence of contradictory states without the need for resolution towards a given pole, and that conceives of life in a way which is not informed by the opposition of nature and humans (Fatheuer, 2011).

John P. Clark (2013), in his magnificent work *The Impossible Community*, has offered an array of possible approaches to take from the perspective of communitarian anarchism. These include a

revised version of the libertarian municipalism of the late Murray Bookchin, the Gandhian Sarvodaya movement in India, and the related movement in Sri Lanka called Sarvodaya Shramadana – the Gandhian approach to self-rule and voluntary redistribution of land as collective property to be managed by means of the *gram sabha* ('village assembly') and the *panchayat* ('village committee'). Sarvodaya Shramadana offers four basic virtues: *upekkha* ('mental balance'), *metta* ('goodwill towards all beings'), *karma* ('compassion for all beings who suffer') and *mundita* ('sympathetic joy for all those liberated from suffering'). Clark's work focuses on the tragedies and contradictions of development and his discussion of India is particularly insightful (see especially pp. 217-245 and the eloquently informative review of Clark's book by Sethness, 2013). More familiar to teachers are perhaps the examples of the Zapatistas and the Landless Peasants' Movement in Brazil. Clark mentions, as well, the indigenous Adivasi struggles and those by Dalits, fighting the paramilitaries of the transnational mining communities in India.

Instead of reducing citizens and non-citizens alike to their racialized and gendered labor productivity, as is the case with the neo-liberal state apparatus, we wish to introduce the term *buen vivir* as an opposing logic to the way we approach our formation as citizen-subjects. We would advise the guardians of the neo-liberal state – especially those who are now in the 'business' of education – to look towards *Las Américas* for new conceptions of democratic life that could serve as a means of breaking free from the disabling logic of neo-liberalism that now engulfs the planet – a new epistemology of living that has so far not been a casualty of the epistemicide of the conquistadores past and present. We still adhere to the proposition that the human mind lives in a largely self-created world of illusion and error, a defective system of false reality from whence we can be rescued only by the development of a critical self-reflexive subjectivity and protagonistic agency. But we would add that such self-creation occurs under conditions not of our own making. Many of those conditions have been created by social relations of production and the way in which neo-liberal capitalism has produced nature/human relations as a total world ecology linked to a racialized social division of labor and hyper-nationalism. Critical consciousness here becomes the inverse equivalent of the ignorance of our false consciousness under capitalist social relations of exploitation and alienation. Hence, we seek a social universe outside of the commodification of human labor, a universe deepened by direct and participatory democracy and a quest for *buen vivir*. Samir Amin pitches the challenges thusly:

Whatever you like to call it, historical capitalism is anything but sustainable. It is only a brief parenthesis in history. Challenging it fundamentally – which our contemporary thinkers cannot imagine is 'possible' or even 'desirable' – is however the essential condition for the emancipation of dominated workers and peoples (those of the periphery, 80 percent of humanity). And the two dimensions of the challenge are indissoluble. It is not possible to put an end to capitalism unless and until these two dimensions of the same challenge are taken up together. It is not 'certain' that this will happen, in which case capitalism will be 'overtaken' by the destruction of civilization (beyond the discontents of civilization, to use Freud's phrase) and perhaps of all life on this earth. The scenario of a possible 'remake' of the 20th century thus remains but falls far short of the need of humanity embarking on the long transition towards world socialism. The liberal disaster makes it necessary to renew a radical critique of capitalism. The challenge is how to construct, or reconstruct, the internationalism of workers and peoples confronted by the cosmopolitanism of oligarchic capital. (Amin, 2010)

Clearly, while we need a new epistemology of *buen vivir* and of Sarvodaya Shramadana to help stave off the epistemicide of indigenous knowledges by means of violent Eurocentric practices, we also need a class struggle of transnational reach.

The learning curve of our politicized youth appears mercifully short, a condition created by necessity more than choice. Few of them doubt the seriousness of the situation that we are facing as inhabitants of our planet. They know too much already, and the question remains as to whether they will use their knowledge to join the fight for socialism, in which they risk life and limb, or decide to give in to the distractions of our electronically wired world of infotainment. As I have written elsewhere:

Global warming and nature–society relations, imperialism, racism, speciesism, sexism, homophobia, genocide and epistemicide are not independent of the capitalist accumulation

process, but mutually inform one another. The youth of today comprehend these myths for what they are – diversions designed to enfeeble the struggle for social justice – and they will never have the same force that they once had. During an unprecedented time when capital permeates lines of demarcation and casts its oppressive force through institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation and the US empire, the young activists of today recognise that they cannot pluck wholeness out of the atomised continent of capitalist culture. They must start anew. The genie of transnational contestation and revolt is now out of the lamp, has identified as an ecological proletariat, and has the potential to alter the course of human history – a history that begins with the overthrow of capitalist regimes of accumulation. Although there is no guarantee that from the conflagration that is capital today socialism will find its redeeming application, there is a fervent willingness among our youth to explore new terrains of contestation and struggle. In the midst of increased surveillance, heightened policing, stop-and-frisk policies on the streets, overbroad gang injunctions, and spiraling rates of juvenile incarceration we see determined efforts by youth who are participating in the US Civil Rights Movement, the transnational lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) movement, in various incarnations of feminist struggle, environmentalism and environmental justice movements, and in the labour, antiwar, and immigrant rights movements; we also see these determined efforts in struggles among youth movements worldwide, who are bearing witness to and participating in the production of various countersummits, Zapatista Encuentros; social practices that produce use values beyond economic calculation and the competitive relation with the other, and are inspired by practices of social and mutual solidarity, by horizontally-linked clusters outside vertical networks in which the market is protected and enforced; by social cooperation through grassroots democracy, consensus, dialogue and the recognition of the other, by authority and social cooperation developed in fluid relations and self-constituted through interaction; and by a new engagement with the other that transcends locality, job, social condition, gender, age, race, culture, sexual orientation, language, religion and beliefs. In short, they support a global *communalidad*. (McLaren, 2014a, p. 159)

If the new generation is to help throw off the chains forged by the centuries-old dogma of the capitalist class, then we cannot leave this challenge only to our youth. We need to offer them hope, but hope at the expense of truth can turn optimism into feelings of omnipotence and can lead to a fatal outbreak of hubris. We need to conjugate our hope with seeking new pathways to justice, despite the grim reality that the odds are not in our favor, and perhaps never will be.

Critical revolutionary pedagogy is non-sectarian and emphasizes ecumenical approaches, attempting to incorporate a Marxist humanist critique of alienation under capitalism into the doxa of critical pedagogy – a move that recognizes consciousness and external reality as mutually constitutive, and asserts that there must be an ethical dimension which gives priority to the oppressed, thereby rejecting many of the ‘*diamat*’ tendencies that held sway in the former Soviet Union and Eastern bloc countries. Such tendencies maintained that they could uncover a transparent reflection of reality and that a focus on human consciousness, self-management and agency within popularly based social movements was unscientific, and that the central focus should be on social relations of production. By contrast, human agency and human needs are not conceptualized by Marxist humanists as secondary or epiphenomenal to objective social forces. Consequently, reform and revolution are not mutually antagonistic relationships, but must be understood in a dialectical relationship to each other. Dialectics does not juxtapose reform and revolution, but mediates them as a ‘both–and’ relationship rather than an ‘either–or’ relationship. The same is true with ecology and the grounding antagonism between capital and labor, such that class struggle is at one and the same time an ecological struggle, taking to heart the Earth First slogan that there can be ‘no jobs on a dead planet’.

Given the post-humanities attack on dialectics by Antonio Negri and others, it might seem antiquated to look to dialectics as a means of creating what Fischman and McLaren (2005) have called the ‘committed intellectual’ as part of the larger development of a philosophy of praxis. However, critics such as Antonio Negri have abandoned dialectics in favor of substituting singular, unresolvable and non-dialectical ‘antagonisms’ for dialectical ‘contradictions’. Asserting that dialectics imposes internal balances in capitalist society, serving as a mechanism for both

establishing and maintaining equilibrium, such critics reject the primacy of the forces of production and the shaping of the social relations of production in accordance to its needs (i.e. the correspondence between the forces and relations of production). As Teresa Ebert (2009) and Ebert and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh (2007) have illustrated, Negri believes that the trans-historical power of the subjectivity of the living labor of the multitude gives labor autonomy from capital through acts of self-valorization and affirmation of singularities. He therefore replaces the proletariat as the agent of class struggle with the multitude, while insisting that capital is merely reactive to the self-valorization of the workers, that labor is in effect a subjective power, and that value is not about economic relations but about power relations. It is easy to see how, under Negri's unfocused eye, class struggle evaporates into a series of unresolvable paradoxes in a world reduced to unknowable, and basically unreadable, linguistic self-referentiality.

The problem with Negri and the other anti-dialecticians is that they reject all forms of transcendence in favor of remaining on the plane of immanence, taking the given social reality as a point of departure (Anderson, 2010). However, Anderson rightly notes that we do not have to choose between immanence and transcendence:

But we do not have to choose between such one-sided alternatives. Consider Hegel's standpoint, as summed up by the Theodor Adorno of the Frankfurt School: 'To insist on the choice between immanence and transcendence is to revert to the traditional logic criticized in Hegel's polemic against Kant' (Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 31). In fact, Hardt and Negri regularly attack Hegel and the Enlightenment philosophers as conservative and authoritarian, while extolling pre-Enlightenment republican traditions rooted in Machiavelli and Spinoza. What they thereby cut themselves off from is the dialectical notion that a liberated future can emerge from within the present, if the various forces and tendencies that oppose the system can link up in turn with an [sic] theory of liberation that sketches out philosophically that emancipatory future for which they yearn.

Marx certainly overcame the pre-Hegelian split between immanence and transcendence. The working class did not exist before capitalism and was a product of the new capitalist order, and was therefore immanent or internal to capitalism. At the same time, however, the alienated and exploited working class fought against capital, not only for a bigger piece of the pie, but also engaged in a struggle to overcome capitalism itself, and was in this sense a force for transcendence (the future in the present). (Anderson, 2010)

Even the illustrious Marcuse in his *Great Refusal* (his analysis of the predatory capitalist system and neoconservatism or what he referred to as 'counterrevolution') displaces the dialectical quality of classical Hegelian and Marxist philosophy, betraying an incapacity to overcome contradiction in his lurching towards a metaphysical or antinomial (neo-Kantian) posture in which he vacillates between two poles of a contradiction, poles of which he regards as antiseptically independent rather than interpenetrating; at times he seemed tragically resigned to the perennial permanence of contradiction and paradox (Reitz, 2000). Here we can benefit from Marx's focus on Hegel's concept of self-movement through second negativity, which leads him to posit a vision of a new society that involves the transcendence of value production as determined by socially necessary labor time. Unlike the popular misconception about Marx's critique of Hegel – that Hegel's idealism was opposed to Marx's materialism – Marx did not criticize Hegel for his failure to deal with material reality. When Marx noted that Hegel knows only abstractly spiritual labor, he was referring to the structure of Hegel's *Phenomenology* and philosophy as a whole, which was based on a dialectic of self-consciousness, in which thought returns to itself by knowing itself (Hudis, 2012). Marx's concept of transcendence, on the contrary, was grounded in human sensuousness, in the self-transcendence of the totality of human powers. Dialectics deals with the transformative contradictions that power the material historicity of capitalist life.

Hegel presented the entire movement of history in terms of the unfolding of the disembodied idea; in other words, he presented human actuality as a product of thought instead of presenting thought as the product of human actuality. Marx, therefore, inverts the relations of Hegel's subject and predicate. Marx criticized Hegel for failing to distinguish between labor as a trans-historical, creative expression of humanity's 'species being' and labor as the reduction of such activity to value production. We need to understand the dialectic, the description of the means by which reality

unfolds, the nature of self-activity, self-development and self-transcendence, and the way that human activity subjectively and temporally mediates the objective world.

The presence of the idea – as negation – in human consciousness has the power to alter the natural world. Marx was not interested in the returning of thought to itself in Hegel's philosophy, but the return of humanity to itself by overcoming the alienation of the objective world brought about by capitalist social relations. In other words, the human being is the agent of the Idea; the Idea is not its own agent. The human being is the medium of the Idea's self-movement. Self-movement is made possible through the act of negation by negating the barriers to self-development. But negation, as Peter Hudis (2012, pp. 72-73) tells us, is always dependent on the object of its critique. Whatever you negate still bears the stamp of what has been negated – that is, it still bears the imprint of the object of negation. We have seen, for instance, in the past, that oppressive forms which one has attempted to negate still impact the ideas we have of liberation. That is why Hegel argued that we need a self-referential negation – a negation of the negation. By means of a negation of the negation, negation establishes a relation with itself, freeing itself from the external object it is attempting to negate. Because it exists without a relationship to another outside of itself, it is considered to be absolute – it is freed from dependency on the other. It negates its dependency through a self-referential act of negation. For example, the abolition of private property and its replacement with collective property does not ensure liberation; it is only an abstract negation which must be negated in order to reach liberation. It is still infected with its opposite, which focuses exclusively on property. It simply replaces private property with collective property and is still impacted by the idea of ownership or having (Hudis, 2012, pp. 71-73). Hudis writes:

[Marx] appropriates the concept of the 'negation of the negation' to explain the path to a new society. Communism, the abolition of private property, is the negation of capitalism. But this negation, Marx tells us, is dependent on the object of its critique insofar as it replaces private property with collective property. Communism is not free from the alienated notion that ownership or having is the most important part of being human; it simply affirms it on a different level. Of course, Marx thinks that it is necessary to negate private property. But this negation, he insists, must itself be negated. Only then can the truly positive – a totally new society – emerge. As Dunayevskaya writes in P&R [*Philosophy and Revolution*], "The overcoming of this "transcendence," called absolute negativity by Hegel, is what Marx considered the only way to create a truly human world, "positive Humanism, beginning from itself". (Hudis, 2005)

However, in order to abolish capital, the negation of private property must itself be negated, which would be the achievement of a positivity – a positive humanism – beginning with itself. While it is necessary to negate private property, that negation must itself be negated. If you stop before this second negation then you are presupposing that having is more important than being (Hudis, 2012). Saying 'no' to capital, for instance, constitutes a first negation. When the subject becomes self-conscious regarding this negation – that is, when the subject understanding the meaning of this negation recognizes the positive content of this negation – then she has arrived at the negation of the negation. In other words, when a subject comes to recognize that she is the source of the negative, this becomes a second negation, a reaching of class consciousness. When a subject recognizes the positivity of the act of negation itself as negativity, then she knows herself as a source of the movement of the real. This occurs when human beings, as agents of self-determination, hear themselves speak, and are able both to denounce oppression and the evils of the world and to announce, in Freire's terms, a liberating alternative. I fully agree with Reitz (2000, p. 263) that critical knowledge 'is knowledge that enables the social negation of the social negation of human life's core activities, the most central of which are neither being-toward-death [as Heidegger would maintain], nor subservience [as Kant would argue], but creative labor'. When subjects create critical knowledge, they then are able to appropriate freedom itself for the sake of the liberation of humanity (Pomeroy, 2004).

Searching for an alternative to capitalism means mining the dynamic potentiality that is latent, but unrealized, in everyday life and, in this regard, it is redolent of a spiritual quest in the manner suggested by Robert M. Torrance (1994). It requires a deliberate and urgent effort by teachers and teacher educators to transcend, through self-transformation, the limits of everyday reality and the human condition under capitalism, and a willingness to marshal this unbounded

potentiality in the direction of social justice. It means realizing the enlarging and transformative potential of the given through a pursuit of the liberation of our collective humanity, a humanity that transcends the individual self not by seeking refuge in an immutable past or inertial present, but by advancing from subjective knowledge to the independently and objectively real that is always oriented to the determinable, living future – a knowledge that is the product of the human mind yet transcends the mind; a knowledge gleaned from the particular through its relationship to the universal; a knowledge that can never be fully apprehended; a knowledge engendered by the seeker yet at the same time transcending the seeker.

We must open our lexicon of critique and transformation to a changing world. As Marx pointed out, any viable exercise of antagonistic agency among the oppressed requires the dialectical self-negation of the working class as a class in itself into a class for itself, a class in which it is imperative to become self-conscious of how its membership is embedded in relations of exploitation and how they have become alienated from their own 'species being' or their own life activity. Of course, the overall purpose of this critical transformation is to become emancipated from labor's value form.

We cannot know what the alternative to capitalist value production will look like until the struggle moves forward and we are able to claim some decisive victories. Only then can we know how we will proceed in forging a new alternative to capitalist commodity production. What is clear is that we must disassemble the self-referential closure of the capitalist trance state in which we find ourselves hopelessly enthralled. Through our passive exposure to electronic media, we willfully submit ourselves to the rituals of everyday capitalist commodity production, to their formulaic and habituated repetitiveness and invariance, to their inert sufferance and wearisome recurrence of stasis – all of which ineluctably and fatally disciplines us to assent uncritically to our own acedia and torpor. The only way out of this impasse is to seek an alternative social universe to that of value production.

This involves a pursuit, despite the fact that the goal can never be fully foreknown or finally attained. There is room for all at the banquet of liberation: trade unionists, civil libertarians, anarchists, students, anti-war activists, Marxists, black and Latino activists, teachers, eco-socialists, fast-food workers, factory workers and animal rights activists. We seek to replace instrumental reason with critical rationality, fostering popular dissent and creating workers' and communal councils and community decision-making structures.

We continue to struggle in our educational projects to eliminate rent-seeking and for-profit financial industries; we seek to distribute incomes without reference to individual productivity, but rather according to need; and we seek to substantially reduce hours of labor and make possible, through socialist general education, a well-rounded and scientific and intercultural development of the young (Reitz, 2013). This involves a larger epistemological fight against neo-liberal and imperial common sense, and a grounding of our critical pedagogy in a concrete universal that can welcome diverse and particular social formations (San Juan, 2007) joined in class struggle. It is a struggle that has come down to us not from the distant past, but from thoughts that have ricocheted back to us from the future.

Note

- [1] This article is an expanded version of the afterword to *This Fist Called My Heart: the Peter McLaren reader* (Charles-Huerta & Pruyun, 2013). Some sections appear in the sixth edition of *Life in Schools* (McLaren, 2014b).

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