

# **After the Box People: The labour-capital relation as class constitution – and its consequences for Marxist educational theory and human resistance**

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## **Introduction**

For those interested in exploring relations between education and social class from a Marxist perspective, or, more accurately examining education as an *aspect* of 'class', these are interesting times. First, as Simon Clarke (1999) notes, we witness the virtual abandonment of the notion of the working class – not just by erstwhile postmodernists, but also by mainstream social scientists. Most people who analyse social class today do no such thing; rather, they have social inequality and stratification in view. Social class itself is evaded and avoided. This bad seed at the heart of capitalist society, indeed its existence at capital's structural core, is covered in mounds of obfuscation even though 'we live it ... It is part of our lives, all around us', as Dave Hill extemporises (Hill, in Cole *et al*, 2001, p.19).

Secondly, viewed as the class relation, the labour-capital relation, the real situation tallies with Dave Hill's gut reaction: class *is* everywhere, is *all around us*, and *within us* (as human capital) – as we live in capital's social universe whose substance is *value* (Rikowski, 2000a, 2001a-b; Neary and Rikowski, 2000). Class taken as the capital relation is inescapable, unavoidable, for there is no hiding place as we live in a specific social universe (the social universe of capital) that is premised upon the tragic antagonism between labour and capital.

Thus, within contemporary social theory in general and class analysis in particular there is a 'reality gap'. There is a chasm between 'class as social inequality and stratification' in theory, and class as an element of the constitution of a world of struggle in practice. The violent relation at the heart of our social world is the *capital relation*, the struggle between labour and capital that is *everywhere*. Looked at in this way, what role does education play? The argument of this article is that education plays a key role in the perpetuation of the capital relation; this is the skeleton in capitalist education's dank basement. This is just one of the many reasons why, in contemporary capitalist society, education assumes a grotesque and perverted form. It links the chains that bind our souls to capital. That it is uncomfortable for educational theorists, researchers, activists and practitioners to talk about such unsavoury topics is not surprising. However, only by uncovering the lid on this issue can Marxist science hope to advance.

## **Social Inequality and Stratification, or Social Class: out of the mainstream**

Today, most social and educational theorists and researchers, rather than work with a notion of social class actually operationalise and utilise notions of social inequality and stratification. On the bases of skill, occupational status and income, individuals are ascribed to various *strata* that are then taken as proxy social classes. Hill and Cole (2001) are meticulous in describing this as the basis for the UK Registrar General's classifications of social class and other academic definitions and frameworks. When we, as social and educational theorists and researchers or political pollsters, utilise these classifications we become 'box people' too. We

collude in the attempt to mirror, or map, in true Ptolemaic fashion, the relative social statuses of persons. As educational theorists and researchers we then use these categories of persons to attempt to 'explain' (in practice this simply amounts to more mapping) what is going on in education, e.g. qualifications outcomes, higher education participation rates and the like.

At one level, the whole process is incredible. Having ranked people on a range of dis/advantage it seems strange that we might then expect those in the lower strata to rise above all these and perform well in other areas. Of course, some do – there are always exceptions – and the rate at which people buck debilitating trajectories expected of them can be measured. But on the grand scale, research that 'discovers' that those in the upper strata tend, on average, to do better than those in the lower strata (in education, for example) almost qualifies as non-research. Thus, papers delivered at a conference on social class and education at King's College London in the summer of 2000 were not saying anything really new or different from what was being written on class and education in the 1980s, or even the 1960s. Only historical details were different. Working class school students seem to be doomed; they appear to be perennially prone to 'underachievement' in education relative to their more privileged middle class peers. But it's a rigged game. Of course, there is some value in trying to explain why it is that middle class pupils do better on average; such studies tell us things about the constitution of capitalist society and the generation of market inequalities. They can also generate explanations regarding the origins of social inequality, worth and social validation, for example (see Rikowski and Rikowski 2002). However, we maintain that they tell us nothing about social class, for, as was noted earlier, the base categories are not social class ones at all but categories of social stratification founded on the combination and aggregation of various measures of social inequality and relative social status.

To get a real grip on social class and education we need to jump out of the mainstream, to get our feet muddy on the banks of Marxist theory. From a Marxist perspective, what is so wrong with the neo-Weberian view of social class that predominates in educational theory and research and its technicist accompaniments (e.g. the UK Registrar General's classification of occupations)? Dave Hill and Mike Cole (2001) summarise some of the key points. As they note, the occupations at the heart of conventional social class categories are based 'not only on income, but also on notions of status and associated consumption patterns and life-styles derived from the work of sociologist Max Weber' (p.29). Furthermore note Hill and Cole, 'while the classifications may be interesting sociologically', Marxists would criticise them on three grounds (*ibid.*). The first shortcoming of conventional neo-Weberian outlooks on social class is that:

...they ignore, indeed hide, the existence of the capitalist class – that class which dominates society economically and politically. This class owns the means of production (and the means of distribution and exchange) – i.e. they are the owners of factories, transport companies, industry, finance, the media. In other words, these consumption-based patterns mask the existence of capitalists, including the super rich and the super powerful: the ruling class. (Hill and Cole, 2001, pp.29-30)

Secondly, and more significantly for Hill and Cole:

...consumption-based classifications of social class gloss over and hide, the fundamentally *antagonistic* relationship between the two main classes in society, the working class and the capitalist class. In Marxist analysis, the working class includes not only manual workers but also millions of white-collar workers – such as bank clerks and supermarket check-out operators ...

whose conditions of work are similar to those of manual workers. (Hill and Cole, 2001, p.30 – first emphasis ours, second emphasis original)

Hill and Cole's third criticism of neo-Weberian and technicist conceptions of 'class' is that:

...by segmenting the working class, they both hide the existence of a working class and they also serve the purpose of 'dividing and ruling' the working class – that, by segmenting different groups of workers, for example white collar and blue collar workers, and workers in work and the so-called 'underclass' workers. These subdivisions of the working class can be termed class fractions or segments (after Ainley, 1993). Such classifications *hide and work to inhibit* or disguise the common interests of these different groups comprising the working class. They serve, in various ways, to inhibit the development of a common (class) consciousness against the exploiting capitalist class. (Hill and Cole, 2001, pp.30-31 – our emphasis)

Thus, Hill and Cole's powerful Marxist critique of the mainstream neo-Weberian perspective on social 'class' indicates that this conventional classification is basically *ideological* in nature. It functions to mask and subvert attempts to analyse class from a critical social scientific perspective concerned with the constitution of capitalist society. Mainstream views on 'class' fail to capture it as a concept that expresses the deep antagonism within the heart of capitalist society. However, as Sanders, Hill and Hankin (1999) note, 'whilst the class war still rages the working class in general has been ... demobilised and only the capitalist class knows itself to be in uniform' (p.105). While conventional class analysis and research misreads the nature and significance of 'class', capital relentlessly oppresses us, and human representatives of capital cheerfully (with their stock options, bonuses and public sector rip-offs) plot the extension of capital's rule over society. Unfortunately, a great deal of Marxist, or socialist, theory is guilty of the same type of misreading.

The problem at the heart of an unspoken alliance between certain classical Marxist theorising of class (such as that evidenced in the writings of Erik Olin Wright and Nicos Poulantzas) and mainstream sociological theories is founded on the basis that they both rest upon a 'box person' mentality. This is based on allocating persons to status groups. Whilst the 'box person' outlook is easy to see in social class frameworks such as the UK Registrar General's and those emanating from mainstream sociologists (such as John Goldthorpe), it is less understandably also present within far too many Marxist theorisations of class.

Bonefeld (1999) argues that 'the comprehension of 'class' and therewith 'class struggle' can go forward *only in and through a critique of 'capital' as the dominant production relation* (p.3 – our emphasis). For Bonefeld, this entails theorising class as an aspect of the critique of political economy, and, in the process, providing a *critique* of class. Thus:

The aim, then, is to go beyond the notion of class as a thing-in-itself and to see class as a constitutive social relationship that exists in and against itself. 'Class' is not an affirmative concept but a critical concept. Such an understanding objects to the glorification of the working class, refuses to espouse it uncritically, and rejects any attempt to tailor theoretical understanding according to the supposed historical role of the working class. (Bonefeld, 1999, p.4)

Class theory, argues Bonefeld is not a 'flag-waving exercise' (1999, p.5). It is not morally committed to viewing contemporary society through working class eyes or from the 'standpoint' of the working class. Class theory is an aspect of the exploration of the constitution of capitalism that is premised upon a project for its abolition. It is an integral part of Marxism as a theory *against* capitalist society, and not just a theory *of* it. Class theory is therefore concerned with the *abolition* of class (Marx's position) and the opening up of human history from the desolation of its pre-history (Dinerstein and Neary, 1998).

Before moving on to the critical concept of class, it should be noted that a critique of social inequality is not deemed unimportant. The gross social inequalities we witness today (between individuals, between social status groups and between the advanced and developing countries) are widening and have intensified over the last 20 years. The critique and analysis of these is crucial. However, our argument on social inequality is similar in form as to that on class: in general, the explanation of social inequality has not been undertaken as a form of *critique* of existing social relations. In this sense, it has not been embarked upon seriously. At stake is the uncovering of the forces that *generate* social inequality. This type of analysis is not content just to describe and tabloidise (in postmodernist or liberal Left mode) the empirical manifestations of these forces as concrete forms of social inequality — the fare of much mainstream sociology. Such a critique must go to the roots of capitalist society—viz. the labour-capital relation.

The analysis of this section has provided the groundwork for uncovering social class. The next section draws back the cloth and pursues the class relation (as capital relation). Eventually, we will explain that the antagonistic relation between labour and capital that rests on a particular *form* of labour (the value-form) resides not only within the capitalist labour process, the work situation. It exists throughout the whole of capital's social universe. We will return to this point after considering a critical concept of class.

## Marx's Critical Concept of Class

To say that class is the major irony or contradiction of the human condition as we enter the third millennium is putting it far too mildly—tragedy 2000 would be much more *apropos*. Today, class is the major factor of social division throughout the globe, as Marx so presciently predicted it would be. It is therefore ironic that many socialists and others who remain desirous of social transformation are swarming toward various new, as well as more traditional, social movements in the desperate attempt to find a radical force capable of replacing the class movement as the agent of social change. Others have refocused their attention on the so-called Third World, not through any laudable or critical reasoning but because they think that this is the only location in which the “true” working class can still be found in any abundance. And of course the greatest tragedy of all is that many others have forfeited their hope—often their desire even—for social transformation.

It is a constant source of amazement and frustration to us that so many socialists, and here we are thinking particularly of those who profess to be Marxists, totally ignore what we consider to be the most essential component of Marx's class analysis—his dialectical concept, or conceptualisation, of class. We have also grown weary of the perpetual battery of excuses: for example, those that blame history or specific political conditions pertaining at specific historical conjunctures, and especially those that blame Marx for his lack of clarity. No one would deny that there are bits of Marx's *oeuvre* that are difficult, but his concept of class is not one of these. However, since it appears to be widely misunderstood or ignored and also because it is absolutely fundamental to all sorts of political—including educational—struggles, it is important to discuss this concept. It must be kept in focus as we discuss other aspects of our collective strategies for global social transformation.

As Ollman (1976) argues, any analysis of Marx's thought should begin with recognition of his concept, or as Ollman calls it, his philosophy, of *internal relations*. The concept of internal relations is the key that unlocks the purported difficulty of Marx's thought. This philosophy, or concept, pertains to a particular form of relational thinking. Although academia is still replete with examples of categorical thinking and analysis, a great deal of intellectual endeavour involves relational thinking and analysis. However, there are two distinct types of relational thinking and they are paradigmatically as far removed from one another as relational thought is from categorical thinking. Tolman (1981) stresses that all of these modes or paradigms of thinking are necessary for the elucidation of social relations and phenomena. However, as people become increasingly immersed in a particular field of study, they are frequently driven to deepen their understanding by shifting to a more sophisticated or complex mode of thinking about the topic or phenomenon they are studying. In other words, each of these ways of conceptualising the subject is valid and serves a function, but at the same time will eventually prove inadequate to a full understanding or intellectual penetration of the phenomenon one is seeking to understand. Once people saturate their ability to comprehend a field of study in terms of categorical thinking, they recognise that the phenomenon they are studying does not exist in isolation but rather in interaction with various other entities. Therefore, they begin to focus their attention on the result, or results, of these interactions. These results—whether we think of the outbreak of war or the formation of a chemical compound—are normally a synthesis of the interacting phenomena, a result of the bringing together of some number of the attributes internal to each phenomenon or situation. To analyse events or phenomena in this way is to think of them in terms of their *external* relations. Two or more entities might come together and interact, but the change that occurs is external to the entities. It is a result that has a separate and independent existence from the original entities once it has come into existence. Just as when a male and a female of some species produce an offspring that continues to exist even when the parents do not.

Clearly, thinking in terms of external relations adds greater complexity to our understanding and is absolutely essential to the advancement of the human intellect. Indeed, in the understanding of certain phenomenon and events it may offer a completely adequate level of comprehension. However, this is not always the case and Marx certainly found that although helpful it was far from sufficient when it came to understanding the material reality of capitalism. This is why he employed a different form of relational thinking in a great deal of his analysis.

We doubt very seriously if Marx was fully aware that his analysis implied this paradigm shift. In fact, he argued that his dialectical "method" was dictated not by some *a priori* method of thought but by the actual—the material—reality of capitalism, itself. Therefore, if Marx explains capitalism in terms of internal relations—the type of relations that are central to his dialectical conceptualisation of capitalism—it is because he found this type of relation in the real world of capitalism. Of course, this was not the world of capitalism that we experience daily but the reality of capitalism that Marx was able to reveal through his penetrating analysis of the surface phenomena—those that constitute our immediate and illusory experience—of capitalism. That Marx found capitalism—his subject of analysis—to be a system comprised of various internal relations is not all that unusual. There are many other areas of our material world—that is, real phenomena or entities—that are also involved in internal relations and that, as a consequence, can only be fully comprehended when analysed accordingly. And

those people who seek to deepen their understandings of these phenomena will of necessity be driven, just as Marx was, to adopt a new, more sophisticated, or complex, way of perceiving them. We are sure that at least a few will come to mind as you read the following explanation of internal relations.

When we conceptualise the internally related nature of something, or, to use Ollman's terminology, when we apply a philosophy of internal relations to our subject of study, we focus on the relation and how it is responsible for the past and present existence of the related entities. These entities are the opposites in the relation. Secondly, we focus simultaneously on the ongoing *internal development* within the related entities. We might also find that the relation leads to the development of a third entity, or something that appears to be similar to the result of an external relation. However, there is an important difference. The results of internal relations do not obtain a separate existence, despite the fact that they often appear to have done so. If the original entities/opposites cease to exist, which can only occur if the relation is abolished, then the result also ceases to exist. Furthermore, once this result of an internal relation is formed it aides and abets the continuing existence of the internal relation by helping to bind, or mediate the related opposites, or entities, within the relation. We will give you the most important example of this as soon as we move on to explaining Marx's dialectical concept of class—that is, the concept of class that is derived from grasping class as an internal relation. First, however, there is a point about terminology—that is the use of, as well as relation between, concepts—that we should make.

We have already suggested a strong connection between dialectical conceptualisation and thinking in terms of internal relations. Indeed, the connection is so strong that for many intents and purposes they can be considered to be synonymous. However, there are distinctions that must be made. At the heart of dialectical thought—its focus or *raison d'être*—is the dialectical contradiction. A dialectical contradiction should not be confused with a logical contradiction, even though there is a relation between them—we hasten to add, however, that this is an external relation. Logical contradictions have to do with the errors in thought or the presentation of one's thinking and also errors in one's behaviour that occur when one utterance or action does not follow logically from a previously stated utterance or a previously executed behaviour. Dialectical contradictions often lead to these contradictory situations, but this is a matter of their consequences rather than a depiction of their form. All dialectical contradictions are internal relations—a relation of two opposite entities/phenomena that could not exist, continue to exist or have come into existence in the absence of their internal relation to one another. Both externally and internally the very nature—past, present and future—of each of the opposites is shaped within its relation to the other opposite. The opposites could not be what they are or what they are to become outside of this relation. When this is an antagonistic relation, the existence of each opposite is variously constrained or hampered by virtue of the fact that it is in an internal relation with its opposite; however one of the opposites, despite these limitations, actually benefits from the relation. It is in the interest of this opposite—often referred to as the positive—to maintain the relation. The other opposite—the negative—although it can better its circumstances temporarily within the relation, is severely limited by its relation to its opposite and sometimes to the point of devastation; therefore, it is in its interest to abolish the relation. This abolition is referred to as "the negation of the negation". The individuals constituting the negative opposites do not cease to exist, but they do cease to exist as the negative, and inferior, opposite they have been due

to their existence within an internal relation/dialectical contradiction—hence this is called the “negation of the negation”. The relationship between a dialectical contradiction and an internal relation is not a mutually exclusive relation. By this we mean that while all dialectical contradictions are internal relations it does not follow that all internal relations are dialectical contradictions. Another term that can be used for a dialectical contradiction—a term that is actually a descriptive phrase—is a “unity of opposites”. We tend to use this term when we want to emphasise the internally related nature of the dialectical contradiction. Having dealt with this terminology, we can now move on to that most important example of an internal relation / dialectical contradiction / “unity of opposites”: the relation between labour and capital that constitutes the class relation.

According to Marx's analysis of capitalism, the dialectical contradiction that lies at the heart of capitalism is the relation between labour and capital. This relation, together with the internal relation between capitalist production and circulation/exchange, constitutes the *essence* of capitalism (Allman, 2001a). The labour-capital relation, however, is our focus. It is the relation that produces the historically specific form of capitalist wealth—the *value form* of wealth. The most accurate and encapsulating way to describe this relation is to posit it as a relation of valorisation. To explain fully what is meant by each of these statements, we must take you on a brief journey through the historical development of capitalism. This will be a selective tour in that there were several preconditions that led to the development of capitalism, but we will be focussing only on those that pertain specifically to Marx's dialectical concept of class.

Human beings have a long history of struggling against scarcity, or struggling to overcome scarcity. Therefore, one of the age-old motivators for further development, and indeed the very survival of various communities has been the need to increase human productivity. For a long period of human history the goal was to fulfil the needs of individuals, families and communities; therefore, if individuals or family units produced a surplus to their own requirements, it was shared or traded in kind within the community. As the productive abilities of people increased, trade between communities became possible and rudimentary markets in certain goods grew in importance. However, it is only with capitalism that all production becomes production for the market. With the exception of very primitive markets where exchange of people's products took place through barter or trade in kind, production for market exchange necessitates a more systematic and reliable basis for exchange. People need to find some common element inherent in what they produce that can become the basis for their exchanges. If we think of their products as commodities, which all products of human labour become once capitalism is fully established, we can conceptualise them as a unity of a use-value with an exchange-value. Clearly, the use-values of different commodities cannot be considered a common factor or a factor that can be used to establish their relative equivalencies. What we need to discover is the factor—a factor that can be represented in measurable units—that determines their exchange-value. The only factor that all commodities share in common is that they are all the result of human labour, and the only external or observable aspect of human labour that can be reduced to measurable units is the time that it takes to produce the commodity.

However, labour-time as the common factor remains problematic because if it were the basis for establishing the equivalency of commodities, then the slowest and probably least skilled workers producing a particular commodity would produce the most value. Once

products are produced for the market, they must be produced in what Marx calls the 'socially necessary labour-time' for the production of a particular commodity. This means that they must be produced in the socially *average* time and with the *average* degree of skill that it takes to produce the commodity at a particular time. That is, they must be produced in at least this amount of time if they are to command a price that reflects the value they contain. In capitalist societies, wealth is measured in labour-time rather than in use-values. It is therefore an abstract rather than concrete form of wealth. Individuals or communities must possess this abstract form of wealth in order to obtain the use-values, or real objects and services they need—objects such as food, clothing and shelter and services, such as health care and education. What we are describing here is what Marx calls "The Law of Value" and the historically specific form of wealth that it leads to. This law only comes into full effect once capitalism is fully established, and capitalism can only be established when a very special commodity becomes available on the market. This is the commodity that Marx calls *labour-power*.

When capitalists purchase labour-power, they obtain people's capacity to labour, but if this were all they received, there would be no capitalism. What capitalists actually receive when they purchase labour-power is people's ability or capacity to create a value greater than their own replacement value—a value greater than their wages or salaries. When people's labour is utilised within the labour-capital relation—and when they, therefore, constitute the dialectical opposite of capital—they enter into a value creating process. This value-creating process is comprised of two parts, which Marx calls necessary labour and surplus labour, or if we focus specifically on value, necessary labour-time and surplus labour-time.

Marx calls the second part of this process the valorisation process. It is within the valorisation process that surplus value—the life-blood of capital—is created. Marx also conceptualised labour, itself, as a dialectical contradiction, or an internal relation of two opposites—concrete labour and abstract labour. People's concrete labour produces use-values—objects or services that are supposed to meet human needs. Their abstract labour, that takes place simultaneously with their concrete labour, constitutes the substance of value, a substance measured in labour-time. Once people produce the value of their own labour-power (expressed as the wage), then any excess labour-time produces the surplus value which is the driving force of capitalist production. The capitalist's profit is a portion of surplus value (as state revenues, insurance, rent and other calls on surplus are drawn off, leaving the remainder as profit).

Marx takes great pains to explain that it is not the type of concrete labour one performs that determines one's class position, but instead one's internal/dialectical relation with capital. Therefore, the idea that it is only manual, or physiological, labour that produces surplus-value is totally erroneous as is the idea that it is only this type of labour that positions one within the working-class, or proletariat. A passage that makes this crystal clear is in volume 1 of *Capital*, where Marx stresses with his customary wit:

The only worker who is productive is one who produces surplus value for the capitalist...[who] contributes towards the self-valorisation of capital. If we may take an example ...from outside the sphere of material production, a school-master is a productive worker when, in addition to belabouring the heads of his pupils, he works himself into the ground to enrich the owner of the school. That the latter has laid out his capital in a teaching factory, instead of a sausage factory, makes no difference to the relation. (1867, p.644, our emphasis)

The most obvious conclusion that can be drawn from Marx's dialectical concept of class is that the dialectical opposite of capital—that is, the working class, or the proletariat—increased exponentially during the last decades of the twentieth century. This is one of the most important and dramatic effects of globalization. And the rapid growth in the numbers of people who constitute the working class will continue this rapid growth as long as capitalism exists. It is not just the millions upon millions of peasants who have become agricultural workers for the giant multi-national agri-businesses and the producers of handicrafts and menial services in the developing world that are being drawn into the labour-capital relation. An increasing number of professional services—including in some places education or parts of the education service—have been turned into commodities, in other words use-values that are dialectically inseparable and unobtainable until the point of purchase from an exchange-value—a price. Once the results of one's labour are commodified, then one's labour itself becomes vulnerable to incorporation, or as Marx calls it, *subsumption* within the labour-capital relation—vulnerable to becoming the commodity Marx calls labour-power. One's labour becomes a potential source of surplus value—of capital—and thus subject to the same experiences of exploitation and alienation that have plagued industrial workers since the inception of capitalism. As a consequence, if we may expand upon the most obvious conclusion: never before has the potential—indeed the reason—been greater for humanity to unite against capitalism.

Unfortunately this unity will not happen without critical education, or what we prefer to call *revolutionary critical education* (see Allman, 1999, and 2001a). It won't happen, or at least not in a way that has any chance of defeating capital. This is because our concept of class—a limited, distorted and undialectical concept—is so entrenched that most people, including a considerable number of stalwart Marxists, think that class has become, at best, a secondary issue, or factor in transformational/revolutionary struggles. This problem is compounded by the fact that subsumption within the labour-capital relation takes place relatively slowly and also unevenly, especially within professional areas of work. People going through the process complain that their work is being de-intellectualised and has become subject to bureaucratic or tighter managerial control and supervision. Increased paperwork, or 'paper pushing', are frequently the focal points in employees' moans concerning the quality of their working lives. Increased levels of stress and stress-related absenteeism are rife in many areas of work. Yet, if workers understood how capitalism actually functions—something that will only happen when and if revolutionary critical education becomes widespread—they would understand both what is happening to them and why it is happening. And educators, one of the professions experiencing this process, would also be able to better understand what is happening to those they teach—how not only they but the labour-power of the future is being groomed for the needs of capital. To cut short a long explanation of a complex situation that is fraught with a multitude of contradictions, one of capital's needs, on a global scale, is millions of young people with a similar level skill—often a very high level. This is not because there are jobs for all of these people. Rather, their level of skill will make them eligible to compete with one another for the jobs that *do* require this level of skill, thereby, as is true of all competition, driving down the value of their labour-powers expressed as wages.

Given this situation and all the dilemmas it poses to our professional lives, what can we do? Instead of striking out against an endless succession of windmills in the fashion of that famous Spanish knight, those who are currently being shaped and moulded to capital's

requirements could join forces and begin to challenge and eventually unite with others in the struggle to abolish the real enemy. As has been argued elsewhere and in more detail, the real enemy is capitalism (Allman 2001a). While we applaud those who have begun to challenge globalization and its institutional minions, such as, the WTO, World Bank and the IMF, we hasten to warn that we will make little progress for humanity until we first understand and then confront, challenge and eventually defeat the real enemy. This enemy is capitalism, or rather global capitalism, and its historically specific form of wealth—a form of wealth, which regardless of the level of human productivity, guarantees humanity a future tormented by the perpetual existence of scarcity and escalating divisions between the rich and the poor. Capitalism depends upon the existence of scarcity—the callous denial of human needs—and also the proliferation of various forms of social division for its very survival. Clearly, humanity's survival will demand its abolition.

### The Violent Relation within Capital's Social Universe

According to the analysis of the previous sections, the generation of capital's social universe, whose substance is value, is based on the antagonistic relation between labour and capital. The class relation *is* the labour-capital relation, and it forms a violent dialectic that generates value. Human representatives of capital (e.g. owners, managers and shareholder and so on) drive labourers on to produce surplus value so that their profits are maximised. Various forms of worker resistance ensue to limit the depredations of capital in the labour process (e.g. oppressive intensification of work through management strategies), to increase wages to heighten living standards (thus increasing the value incorporated as necessary labour) and to enhance working conditions. Hence: the *production of value and surplus-value is struggle based on antithetical social drives*; the relation between labour and capital *is* class, indeed, *is the constitution of class as a social relation of production*. Thus, class is the capital relation: the dynamic, contradictory, antagonistic relation that generates and maintains the social universe of capital. No 'class' in *this* sense implies no capital, and a different social universe.

Traditionally, Marxism has focused on the class struggle at the point of production. Some Marxists make a fetish out of strike statistics note Bonefeld (1999) and Holloway (1999). If there were no strikes at all this would not mean the termination of class or the class struggle. Strikes constitute only one form of the concretisation of the social antagonism that is at the heart of capitalist society. As capital, with value as its social substance, constitutes a veritable social universe, *it is everywhere*; and, therefore, *the class struggle is everywhere too*. The whole social universe is subject to the 'violent relation' between capital and labour. This section seeks to demonstrate this.

Capital's social universe is an expanding one. This expansion takes three main forms (Rikowski, 2001d). First, spatially (globalization) as capital fills all known socio-physical space (and this is not just confined to this planet). This is its *extension*. Secondly, capital expands as the differentiated form of the commodity, through the invention of new types of commodity. It expands through variegated and differentiated examples of itself. This is its *differentiation*. Thirdly, capital expands through *intensification*; it deepens and develops within its own domain.

An appropriate example of capital's rapid expansion is what is happening today in education in England. Contemporary education is being *capitalised* at an increasing speed (Rikowski, 2001c). The World Trade Organisation's (WTO) education agenda is to speed up

the capitalisation of education through its commercialisation, privatisation, liberalisation and marketisation (*ibid.*). In England, this involves capital's *extension* in particular (into new fields through the Private Finance Initiative, competitive tendering and so on in the UK), *differentiation* (especially through the development of new information and technology products designed specifically for educational institutions, something universities themselves are engaged in) and *intensification*. Empirical and historical research could explore these developments; though it is unlikely research funders would stump up the money for Marxist research that seeks to contribute towards changing the world and not just researching it.

On this analysis, Marx was correct to speak of the 'becoming' of capital (1844). The social universe existing today is a specific form of totality in constant, restless development. Capital, as a social force, progressively permeates all that there is, and intensifies its existence wherever it moves. In doing this, it is simultaneously *powered by* and *establishes the class relation*. The tragedy is that our labour, already divided against itself, assists at each and every stage in this process of bringing the class relation to life, extending its domain and intensifying its operation. The upside is that we, *as labour*, also exist not just in capital, but also *against capital*. Capital's drive for social intensification can be blocked, subverted and delayed (e.g. Seattle late-1999 and the struggle against the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank post-Seattle). However, the social drive for its expansion re-asserts itself, and if capital could speak directly to us it would always say: "I'll be back! Though perhaps in different clothes".

There are no exceptions to capital's expansion. There are no islands of safety, no special cases. This proposition offends the sensibilities of liberal Left educational theorists and researchers most when it is taken to the limit and 'the human' itself is included. But this final step must be made; in capital's social universe 'the human' is capitalised too (Rikowski, 2001d). Thus, the concept of 'human capital', rather than being the subject of mirth and derision, rejected as a hopeless 'bourgeois' concept, actually expresses something real and horrific: the capitalisation of the human.

The important point to note is that *the class struggle is also within the 'human'*. The struggle between the human as capital (and this also implies the incorporation of capital's *contradictions* into the human too) and the human as 'not-capital' takes place within individuals, intersubjectively and collectively. What is required to get to the bottom of this is a *psychology of capital*, a psychology that explores capital as a form of the human, and the human as a form of capital (Rikowski, 2001d). Class within the human can best be viewed as a 'clash of force and drives' within the human that engage with other contradictory drives and social forces within personhood as an aspect of the totality. These are expressed in and through our "everyday lives". Thus, empirical study of these expressions of the 'class struggle within the human' is possible in principle. We should not be deterred by the fact that it is unlikely that research funders would encourage such subversive research.

Marx discusses two types of labourer. There are those that produce value in the labour process that is incorporated in commodities, on the one hand. On the other hand, there are those that socially produce labour-power (e.g. teachers), or maintain labour-power (e.g. health workers) or socially reproduce the labour-powers of the future (e.g. those who labour in the home, the family, and those such as child-minders). The reality of capitalist social existence indicates that labourers take on *both* characteristics. Thus, the great rift *within labour as a form of social existence within capitalist society* is not between two great groups of labourers. The split is founded on the basis of a relation *internal to labour itself*—labour as value-producer

and labour as labour-power developer. This relation is internal to all labour, an aspect of the social existence of all labourers. This is a point that is crucial for political clarity.

The next two sections indicate how education fits into the arguments so far advanced. It follows from what has been said that capitalist education and training are implicated in the constitution of class as the relation between labour and capital. This is because capitalist education and training constitute key processes within the social production of labour-power in capitalism today. The following section pinpoints the significance of this.

## **Education and the Tragedy of Labour: social class and education**

The social production of labour-power was a process that Marx never discussed in great depth. Its social existence was only rudimentary in his time, with state schooling just emerging. Indeed, its lack of social definition in Marx's day led him to conclude that:

Labour, as a social and natural force does not develop within the valorisation process as such, but within the actual labour process. It presents itself therefore as a set of attributes that are intrinsic to capital as a thing, as its use-value. (1866, p.1056)

Thus: the labour process itself is a force that develops labour-power. Marx (1863, p.148, and 1865, p.292) distinguishes between the costs of production of specific labour-powers and their reproduction, but the social production of labour-power in general remains shadowy. As argued elsewhere by Rikowski (1999), there are basically two aspects to the social production of labour-power:

First, there is the development of labour power potential, the capacity to labour effectively within the labour process. Secondly, there is the development of the willingness of workers to utilise their [abilities], to expend themselves within the labour process as value-creating force. This is manifested in all the studies that pinpoint work attitudes as the most sought after and significant attribute of workers in recruitment studies, and the exhortations of employers that schools must produce 'well motivated' young people, with sound attitudes to work and recruits who are 'work-ready' and embody 'employability' – though these points would need to be driven home through focused empirical and historical studies. (p.77)

The social production of labour-power refers to a process that is fragmented in capitalist society. Today, it typically includes compulsory education. However, it can include training (on- and off-the-job), various forms of personal development programs, further and higher education, computer-based training and many other elements. It also develops through labour itself, in the labour process – as Marx notes above. This last is labour-power's "automatic" production, though various 'learning company' strategies are attempts to formalise it.

In mainstream sociology, education and training are approached as sites of the production of multiple dimensions of social, market and economic status and identities – including these as they relate to social class. Here, however, the focus is on the social production of the commodity that makes the class relation possible, and hence makes *capitalism* possible: *labour-power*. The transformation of labour-power into labour in the capitalist labour process creates value, capital's social substance. Education and training, in turn, shape and develop labour-power. They are vital supports to, and developers of, the class relation, the violent labour-capital relation that is at the core of capitalist society and development.

However, because education and training socially produce labour-power, and there are real limits to this process, this is a source of labour's strength as well as its tragic predicament. On the latter, the tragedy of labour results from the fact that labour creates its own opposite (capital) that comes to dominate it (Postone, 1996). Indeed, it creates something that permeates its own soul in the form of human capital. On the other hand, teachers and trainers are implicated in socially producing the single commodity – labour-power – on which the whole capitalist system rests. This gives them a special sort of *social power*. They work at the chalkface of capital's weakest link: labour-power. Hence, they have the capacity to work with *Red Chalk* (McLaren, 2001; Cole *et al*, 2001): to open up visions of alternatives to capitalism in the classroom, or at least provide vital critiques of its violent class relation and market inequalities. Teachers are in a special position regarding their capacity to disrupt and to call into question the capitalist class relation. Furthermore, teachers can also insert principles of social justice into their pedagogy, principles that are antithetical to the generation of the class divide and also market and social inequalities (as articles in Cole and Hill (1999) indicate). This is essential, for as Peter McLaren (2000) has argued, the task of forging new forms of pedagogy that clash against capital's limited forms of social life involves making 'liberation and the abolition of human suffering the goal of the educative enterprise itself' (p.185). For:

Regardless of the personal, epistemological, ontological, and moral paths that we choose to take as educators, at some point we have to come face-to-face with the naked reality of capitalist social relations in both local and global contexts. We cannot ignore these relations, and if we are to engage in a revolutionary educational praxis, we need to do more than rail against the suffering and tribulations of the oppressed and instead seek ways of transforming them. (McLaren, 2000, p.190)

Clearly, education is an aspect of the class relation; it is involved in generating the living commodity, labour-power whose consumption in the labour process is a necessary condition for the social existence of the class relation between labour and capital in contemporary capitalism. This is tragic, but also yields educators a special sort of social power, for education also has:

...the potential to provide a spark that can ignite the desire for revolutionary democratic social transformation throughout the world. (Paula Allman, *Education on Fire!* – 2001b, p.10)

In this way, education can be the foundation of a politics of human resistance to the capitalisation of humanity and also one of the forces playing a key role in the development of forms of labour *not* tied to the value-form.

### **Revolutionary Pedagogy: education as human resistance, and the dissolution of the class relation**

Critical pedagogy has had a tumultuous relationship with the dominant education community both in North America (McLaren, 1997) and the United Kingdom (Allman, 1999; 2001a) for the past twenty-five years. We do not wish to rehearse this vertiginous history here, since we assume that most progressive educators have at least some sense of its presence or lack thereof in the particular precincts where they practice their pedagogy. In the mid-seventies to mid-eighties the role of critical pedagogy was much more contestatory with respect to

dominant social and economic arrangements. That it was often conflated with liberation theology in Latin America and with anti-imperialist struggle world-wide accounts for its failure to be preconised in the cultural chambers of the ruling elite. Our own practices – what Paula Allman (2001a) has christened “revolutionary critical pedagogy” – ups the radical ante for progressive education which, for the most part over the last decade, has been left rudderless amidst an undertow of domesticating currents. It ups this ante by pivoting around the work of Karl Marx, Paulo Freire, and Antonio Gramsci and in doing so brings some desperately needed theoretical ballast to the teetering critical educational tradition. Such theoretical infrastructure is necessary, we argue, for the construction of concrete pedagogical spaces – in schools, university seminar rooms, cultural centres, unions, social movements, popular forums for political activism, etc. – for the fostering and fomenting of revolutionary praxis.

Unscrolling the present state of critical pedagogy and examining its depotentiated contents, processes, and formations puts progressive educators on notice in that few contemporary critical educators are either willing or able to ground their pedagogical imperatives in the concept of labour in general, and in Marx's labour theory of value in particular. This is certainly more the case in North American educational settings than it is in the United Kingdom, the latter context having had a much more serious and salutary engagement with the Marxist tradition in the social sciences, and in one of its professional offshoots: adult education.

While it certainly remains the case that too many teachers take refuge in a sanctuary of assertions devoid of reflection, it would be wrong to admonish the educational activism of today as a form of pedagogical potvaliancy. Courageous attempts are being made in the struggle for educational reform on both sides of the Atlantic. In this case, we need to be reminded that the lack of success of the educational Left is not so much the result of the conflicted sensibilities of critical educators, as it is a testament to the preening success of Western Cold War efforts in indigenising the cultural logic of capitalism, the fall of the Eastern Bloc non-profit police states, and the degradation and disappearance of Marxist meta-narratives in the national-popular agendas of decolonising countries. It can also be traced to the effects of the labour movement tradition which keeps labour-left educators struggling inside the labour/capital antagonism by supporting labour over capital, rather than attempting to transcend this divide entirely through efforts to implode the social universe of capital out of which the labour/capital antagonism is constituted.

We believe that the concept of labour is axiomatic in theorising the school/society relationship and thus for developing radical pedagogical imperatives, strategies, and practices for overcoming the constitutive contradictions that such a coupling generates. The larger goal we have stipulated for radical educationalists involves direct participation with the masses in the discovery and charting of a socialist reconstruction and alternative to capitalism. However, without a critical lexicon and interpretative framework that can unpack the labour/capital relationship in all of its capillary detail, critical pedagogy is doomed to remain trapped in domesticated currents and vulgarised formations. The process whereby labour power is transformed into human capital and concrete living labour is subsumed by abstract labour is one that eludes the interpretative capacity of rational communicative action and requires a dialectical understanding that only historical materialist critique can fully provide. Historical materialism provides critical pedagogy with a theory of the material basis of social life rooted in

historical social relations and assumes paramount importance in uncovering the structure of class conflict as well as unravelling the effects produced by the social division of labour.

In this interregnum, in particular, where the entire social universe of capital is locked up in the commodity form, where capital's internal contradictions have created a global division of labour that appears astonishingly insurmountable, and where the ecological stakes for human survival have shifted in such seismic proportions, creating a vortex in which reactionary terrorism has unleashed its unholy cry, we lament the paucity of critical/pedagogical approaches to interrogating the vagaries of everyday life within capital's social universe.

Our purpose in this section is not to develop a comprehensive perspective on or programmatic architectonic of critical pedagogy, something that has already been accomplished in the works of Paula Allman and others. Our intention is much more modest in scope but is never the less crucial if critical pedagogy is ever to release itself from the current grip of its left-liberal masters who wield it not as a tool for liberation but rather as an enfeebled teaching mechanism for resignifying capitalist social relations in a register that has the appearance of liberation but that works to reproduce the rule of capital. Our modest purpose therefore is to uncoil some of the conceptual tensions that exist in linking up the concept of critical pedagogy to that of class struggle. In doing so we must develop at the very least a number of provision points: (1) a sense of what constitutes critical agency and revolutionary praxis, and (2) a nuanced notion of what liberation means at this particular historical juncture.

In developing further the concept of revolutionary critical pedagogy and its specific relationship to class struggle, it is necessary to repeat, with a slightly different emphasis, some of the positions we have discussed earlier on in the paper. We follow the premise that value is the substance of capital. Value is not a thing. It is the dominant form that capitalism as a determinate social relation takes. Following Dinerstein and Neary (2001), capital can be conceived as "value-in-motion." Marx linked the production of value to the dual aspect of labour. Workers do not consume what they produce but work in order to consume what others have produced. Labour is thus riveted in both use-value and exchange-value (see also Allman, 2000, 2001; Rikowski, 2000b, 2001a, 2001d). Domination in this view is not so much by other people as by essentially abstract social structures that people constitute in their everyday social intercourse and socio-political relations. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx emphasised that "society does not consist of individuals; it expresses the sum of connections and relationships in which individuals find themselves...[Thus,] to be a slave or to be a citizen are social determinations" (cited in San Juan, 1996, p. 248). Labour, therefore, has a historically specific function as a social mediating activity.

Labour materialises itself both as commodified forms of human existence (labour-power) and structures that constitute and enforce this process of generalised social mediation (such as money and the state) against the workers who indirectly constituted them. These determinate abstractions (abstract labour) also constitute both human capital and the class struggle against the exploitation of living labour and the 'capitalisation' of human subjectivity.

This split within capital-labour itself is founded on the issue of whether labour produces value directly or labour-power. Following Dinerstein and Neary (2001), we adopt the premise that abstract labour is underwritten by value-in-motion, or the expansive logic of capital (referring to the increases in productivity required to maintain capitalist expansion). Abstract labour is a unique form of social totality that serves as the ground for its own social relation. It

is socially average labour-power that is the foundation of the abstract labour that forms value (Rikowski, 2001d). In the case of abstract labour, labour materialises itself twice – first as labour and the second time as “the apparently quasi-objective and independent structures that constitute and enforce this process of generalised social mediation: money (economics) and the state (politics) against the workers who constituted them” (Neary, 2001, p. 7; see also Postone, 1996). This value relation – captured in the image of the capitalist juggernaut driving across the globe for the purpose of extracting surplus-value (profit) – reflects how the abstract social dimension of labour formally arranges (through the imposition of socially necessary labour-time) the concrete organisation of work so that the maximum amount of human energy can be extracted as surplus-value. Here, concrete labour (use-value) is overwhelmed by abstract labour (value-in-motion) so that we have an apparently *non-contradictory unity*. That is to say, capital’s abstract-social dimension dominates and subsumes the concrete material character of labour and so becomes the organising principle of society – the social factory where labour serves as the constituent form of its own domination. This is the process of ‘real subsumption’ where humanity’s ‘vital powers’ are mightily deformed. This helps to explain how workers become dominated by their own labour. Labour becomes the source of its own domination. The subsumption of concrete labour by abstract labour or value-in-motion is what Dinerstein and Neary refer to as Disutopia. Disutopia captures vividly the current time in which students and teacher toil. They write:

Disutopia is the most significant project of our time. It is not the temporary absence of Utopia but the celebration of the end of social dreams. Social dreams have become a nightmare in which it is impossible to materialise our desires into a collective thought. Disutopia should not be confused with the form in which it appears: indifference. Disutopia entails an active process involving simultaneously the struggle to control diversity and the acclamation of diversity; the repression of the struggles against Disutopia and celebration of individual self-determination. The result of this is social schizophrenia. In so far as diversity, struggle and contradiction cannot be eliminated by political or philosophical voluntarism, Disutopia has to be imposed. The advocates of Disutopia spend a huge amount of time in de-construction, repentance, denial, forgetfulness, anti-critique, coupled with academic justifications and the scientific classification of the horrors of our time. Whilst the reality of capitalism is destroying planet earth, Disutopia pictures Utopia as a romantic, naive and old-fashioned imaginary that is accused of not dealing with the real world. However, our point is that Disutopia can only be sustained by denying the real content of life, i.e. the foundations of the real world. The result of all this together is mediocrity. (2001, p. 4)

Yet the contradictory logic of this production of real abstraction takes concrete forms – such as teachers fighting against pay cuts, workers fighting for their jobs or anti-globalization struggles unleashed in the streets. These types of struggles disconnect themselves from the struggle they claim to be representing because they are still positing capital against labour. Here, class struggle follows the value form of labour. Following Dinerstein and Neary (in press), we are making an immanent critique derived from the idea of the subsumption of concrete labour by abstract labour and in so doing are making the additional claim that capital is not against labour so much as capital constitutes an impossible human society. Thus, it is not enough to critique capital but we must critique in and against capital. Our pedagogical struggle must be anti-value-in-motion. In sum, *all pedagogical struggle must be linked to class struggle*, which in turn must be linked to the relation internal to all labour, the split or rift within labour as a form of social existence within capitalist society. *Class struggle as both the source and the effect of critical pedagogy is therefore implicated in the tragic truism that labour creates its own opposite (capital) that comes to dominate it.* As Dinerstein and Neary (in press) make clear,

the issue of class struggle needs to be approached from the perspective of *a critique of capital and its value form of labour*.

Rikowski's adaptation of Marx's value theory of labour, which reveals how education is implicated in the social production of labour-power in capitalism, becomes crucial here. Rikowski's premise, which is provocative yet compelling (and perhaps deceptively simple), can be summarised as follows: Education is involved in the direct production of the one commodity that generates the entire social universe of capital in all of its dynamic and multiform existence: labour-power. Within the capital's social universe, individuals sell their capacity to labour – their labour-power – for a wage. In fact, the only thing that workers can sell in order to obtain their own necessities is their labour-power; thus, they have only one life-sustaining commodity to sell as long as they are trying to survive within capitalist social relations. Within this process labour provides an important use-value for capital. Furthermore, as human will or agency is partially incorporated within labour-power (though never totally, as the will is also an aspect of ourselves constituted as *labour against capital*), and because it is impossible for capital to exist without labour-power, this strange living commodity is therefore *capital's weakest link*. The unique, living commodity that capital's social universe depends upon for its existence and expansion, labour-power, is subject to an aspect of the human will that is antagonistic to capital's depredations and demands: ourselves *constituted as labour against capital*. This aspect of our social existence as labourers drives us on to maximise the quality of our existence within capitalist life; better wages, better working conditions, and fewer working hours and so on. As labour against capital workers yield labour-power conditionally, at times grudgingly and in extreme circumstances (e.g. strikes) not at all. This creates massive insecurities for human representatives of capital. Such insecurity is expressed in management and business studies through attention to the perennial problem of workers' attitudes, and studies on the 'motivation' problem regarding workers' willingness to expend their precious commodity by transforming their capacity to labour into *actual* labour in the labour process.

As capitalist education is involved in the production of labour-power it can be re-designed within a social justice agenda that will reconfigure labour-power for socialist alternatives to human capital formation. This reconfiguration is simultaneously an aspect of the overall drive for social transformation and the struggle for socialism. It is not just a case of reclaiming labour-power (and also the capitalist education and training on which its development partly depends). Rather, in a project of radical social transformation, labour-power (and by implication education and training) must be reconfigured as aspects of this the broader and more general social transformation. In this process, labour-power is de-commodified and *re-humanised*, and developed for a new society – with the labourers, the possessors of labour-power, being active participants and democratic shapers of all the new forms of labour-power developed set in train.

Today, labour-power is capitalised and commodified and education plays a tragic role in these processes. According to Rikowski, education "links the chains that bind our souls to capital. It is one of the ropes comprising the ring for combat between labour and capital, a clash that powers contemporary history: "the class struggle"" (2001d, p.2). Schools therefore act as vital supports for, and developers of, the class relation, "the violent capital-labour relation that is at the core of capitalist society and development" (2001d, p.19)

As a consequence of this, we need to devise forms of labour-power expenditure and development *not tied to the value-form of labour*. In the meantime, teachers are in a structural

position to subvert the smooth flow of labour-power production by inserting principles in opposition to the domination of capital (Rikowski, 2001a). Rikowski asserts that while teachers are surely helpful in reproducing the ideological fabric of capitalism, they are also potentially “dangerous to capital and its social domination”(2001a, p. 38). He argues that educators constitute the “guardians of the development of the one commodity that keeps capitalism going [labour- power], whilst also being in a structural position to *subvert the smooth flow of labour-power production by inserting principles antagonistic* to the social domination of capital. Such principles include social justice, equality and solidarity for progressive social change” (original italics, 2001a, p. 38).

Let us expand upon the idea of subverting labour-power production for a moment because it forms the basis of our revolutionary critical pedagogy. The concept of liberation that informs our project here stipulates that the logic of emancipation is contained within the apparent non-contradictory unity of the commodity (Neary, 2001). Critique cannot be derived from the standpoint of labour (i.e., whether such derivation is ontological, normative, metaphysical or romantic). This is because the oppressed under capitalism are always circumscribed by a determined totality; they are always already implicated in capitalist social relations as the necessary ground of capitalist exploitation such that they – as workers -- exist primarily and permanently as commodified labour. Thus, they have no point of reference with which to articulate a counter-praxis to capital, or a counter-principle to capitalist society. Labour is the source of its own domination even though conflict and struggle are structurally endemic to the labour/capital relation. Any critical pedagogy that wants to move beyond reformism must recognise that in order to achieve emancipation for the oppressed the social relations out of which labour’s antagonistic relation to capital – i.e., the structuring principles of capital’s contradictory constitution – must be smashed outwards or imploded inwards (or both).

Revolutionary critical pedagogy adopts a theory of agency that sees subjectivity not as wholly determined by capital in some mechanically deterministic way; rather, the contradictions among the social forces that are constitutive of subjectivity provide the cracks in capital’s armour, forming apertures through which directions and opportunities for contesting capital can be gleaned (as long as critical consciousness is sufficiently present). Contesting capital takes the form of class struggle.

In our formulation of revolutionary critical pedagogy, we are using the term “class struggle” after Rikowski (2001d), as a social relation that exists between labour and capital. It is one of the primary phenomena integral to the existence of capitalist society, “an element of the constitution of a world struggle” (2001d, p.1) that is constituted everywhere that capital’s hydra-headed tentacles are able to effect a slithering grasp on social life. There is no escape from it. Rikowski’s perspective that the class relation simply *is* the labour-capital relation that forms the “violent dialectic” that in turn generates all value becomes a bedrock assumption in the revolutionary critical pedagogy we are attempting to advance here. Class struggle is born out of the antagonistic relation between labour and capital. In fact, Rikowski argues that class struggle occurs *intersubjectively* as well as collectively as a clash of contradictory forces and drives within the social totality. Rikowski notes that:

The class relation runs through our personhood. It is internal to us; we are labour, and we are capital. We are social beings incorporating antithetical social drives and forces. This fact sets off contradictions within our lives, and their solution can only come from the disintegration of ourselves as both capital and labour and our emergence as a new, non-capitalised life-form. (2001d, p. 20)

The struggle among what Marx called our 'vital powers', our dispositions, our inner selves and our objective outside, our human capacities and competencies and the social formations within which they are produced, *ensures* the production of a form of human agency that reflects the contradictions within capitalist social life. Yet these contradictions also provide openness regarding social being. They point towards the possibility of collectively resolving contradictions of 'everyday life' through revolutionary/transformational praxis (Allman, 1999). Critical subjectivity operates out of practical, sensuous engagement within social formations that enable rather than constrain human capacities. Here critical pedagogy reflects the multiplicity and creativity of human engagement itself: the identification of shared experiences and common interests; the unravelling of the threads that connect social process to individual experience; rendering transparent the concealed obviousness of daily life; the recognition of a shared social positionality; unhinging the door that separates practical engagement from theoretical reflection; the changing of the world by changing one's nature. Critical pedagogy is able to nourish free-conscious activity in the "species-character" of working class men and women because of what Merrifield calls the "prodigious power of human dissatisfaction" and the "drive to attain justice and class vengeance" (2001, p. 80).

Andy Merrifield summarises these powers as follows:

For Marx, problems of our world – real social dilemmas – are approachable and resolvable only in a practical way, "only through the practical energy of man." The "reality of our essential powers" is especially tangible in our "species-activity," in our own "everyday, material industry." The way we toil, the way we struggle every day, shaping our lives, consciously and thoughtfully, makes us special, takes us beyond other animals. We are special because we are equipped with what Marx calls – and italicise – "vital powers." (Marx emphasises this point because he knows that for many people, for many working class people especially, these vital powers are denied, enervated, abused; numbed by deadening routine, by repetitive work without content, by lousy housing, by junk food.) These powers exist in all of us as "dispositions," "capacities," and "drives," irrespective of our social class. They energise us as human beings, define our nature, spur us on somehow. At the same time, the "objects of these drives are objects that exist outside us, exist independent of us, yet are "indispensable to the exercise and confirmation of our essential powers." We've got to have them, and as we try to get them, we become sensuous. (2001, pp. 79-80)

Practicing revolutionary critical pedagogy is not the same as preaching it. Revolutionary critical educators are not an apocalyptic group; they do not belong to a predicant order bent on premonishing the capitalist crisis to come. Revolutionary critical pedagogy is not in the business of presaging as much as it is preparatory; it is in the business of pre-revolutionising; preparing students to consider life outside the social universe of capital – to "glimpse humanity's possible future beyond the horizon of capitalism" (Allman, 2001a, p.219). What would such a world be like? What type of labour would be – should be – carried out? But revolutionary critical pedagogy is not born in the crucible of the imagination as much as it is given birth in its own practice. That is, revolutionary critical education is decidedly more praxiological than prescoring. The path is made by walking, as it were. The principles that help to shape and guide the development of our 'vital powers' in the struggle for social justice via critical/revolutionary praxis have been discussed at length by Allman (2001a, pp.177-186). These include: principles of mutual respect, humility, openness, trust and co-operation; a commitment to learn to "read the world" critically and expending the effort necessary to bring about social transformation; vigilance with regard to one's own process of self-transformation and adherence to the principles and aims of the group; adopting an "ethics of authenticity" as a guiding principle; internalising social justice as passion; acquiring critical, creative, and hopeful

thinking; transforming the self through transforming the social relations of learning and teaching; establishing democracy as a fundamental way of life; developing a critical curiosity; and deepening one's solidarity and commitment to self and social transformation and the project of humanisation.

To summarise: The revolutionary critical pedagogy we are envisioning operates from the premise that capital in its current organisational structure provides the context in which working class struggle develops. Revolutionary critical pedagogy in this sense can be viewed as a form of human resistance to the "classification" of our souls, our lives, our relationships with others and social life *in toto*. As such, revolutionary pedagogy is a vital weapon in uncovering the ground of our being as social entities necessarily shot through with "class": the labour-capital relation. But class struggle must move well beyond a struggle for redistributing rights, responsibilities or resources within the established world of capital. Such struggles – whilst often important in themselves – do little to bring about a dismantling of capital's predacious rule or its privileging hierarchies linked to the international social division of labour. And in some cases, by disguising themselves as socially democratic transformative practices, reformist struggles actually serve to reproduce dominant social relations -- putting brass knuckles on the velvet fist of neo-liberalism. Nor do such practices sufficiently contest the labour-capital relation that condemns working class labour as the founding form of its own domination. This is because, as we have argued, concrete labour (use-value) is overwhelmed by abstract labour (value-in-motion) resulting in *a non-contradictory unity*. Facing such a predicament, Rikowski (2001a) notes that: "If labour-power is the weakest link in the domination of capital's rule and at the heart of socialist transformation then the question of *critical pedagogy* is crucial." The soil out of which labour sprouts is the apparent non-contradictory unity of the commodity that embodies the two dimensions of capital: use-value and exchange-value. However, value contains its own demon-seed because while it undeniably increases the productive power and knowledge of humanity in alienated form, it also points to a non-alienated re-appropriation of such knowledge by the oppressed. Consequently, revolutionary critical educators need not affirm the labour of the oppressed but rather scorch the earth that provides nourishment for labour – i.e., abolish the social relation based on the two forms of labour – in order that the human capacities and vital forces of our species-being can take root in the soil of non-alienated social formations.

Revolutionary critical pedagogy encourages students and teachers to move beyond the domination of capital's rule embodied in the apparent non-contradictory unity of the commodity form by asking: What is the maximum damage can we do to the rule of capital, to the dominance of capital's value form? Ultimately, the question we have to ask is: Do we, as radical educators, help capital find its way out of crisis, or do we help students find their way out of capital? The success of the former challenge will only buy further time for the Bushites and the Blairites to continue their war on the world's working class; the success of the later will determine the future of our planet, or whether or not we will have one.

Working class struggle becomes the seedbed of revolutionary praxis and transformation only when it directs its struggle from *within and against* labour – and not from the standpoint *of* labour – so that it can manifest itself beyond the horizon of capital and instantiate new forms of freely associated labour outside of capital's value-producing social factory (i.e., so that it can bring about new socialist futures of non-alienated labour). We need a pedagogy, therefore, that can help students reconstruct the objective context of class struggle

by examining the capitalist mode of production as a totality, a process that includes Marx's labour theory of value. This mandates teaching students to think dialectically, to think in terms of "internal relations", such as creating an internal relation between diversity and unity, and between our individuality and our collectivity (Allman, 2001a). Here we must work "toward establishing a counter-capitalist, pro-humanity form of world-wide togetherness, or universality, as an alternative and a challenge to capital's pseudo-universalism" (Allman, 2001a, p.221). Here the radicality of Marx's work is not implicit in the categories through which he writes – the working class, capital, etc. – so much as it is to be found within the process out of which the categories are formed and the method with which he uncovers the development of that process. This critical approach points to the significance of the commodity-form in Marx's work, the process of commodity fetishism, and the reinterpretation of Marx's work as a theory of social form (Neary, 2001).

Following from Marx's idea of labour's value-form, we need to move beyond neo-Weberian notions of social class. As Andy Merrifield notes, Marx:

...never looked upon class as an occupational category or as a rigid, quantifiable numbers game, assessed by any census. For him, class is always a dynamic process, an intricate battle of roles and relationships, in which individuals become "bearers" of economic categories and interests, interests that are changeable over time and space. For Marx, the role played by the group he christened the "modern working class" was – as it still is – necessarily complex. Sometimes, for instance, the role and interests of its members are ambiguous; sometimes their constitution changes, their "personification" of labour-power has them wear many hats, dress in different clothes, live in pretty suburban houses as well as squalid inner city tenements. As an experiential being, the working class uses its brains, hands and feet to make something useful or to provide a service for somebody else in exchange for a wage. Other times, the working class's enslavement to capital is "concealed by a variety of individual capitalists to whom it sells itself." None of this, however, annuls the fact that its members must labour in some way to earn a living. (2001, pp. 74-75)

Practising revolutionary critical pedagogy in a global context of increasing violence, poverty and horror requires a considerable dose of hope, and even more if the attempt is to develop alternative proposals to the current process of intensification of teachers' work. Paulo Freire reminds us that we cannot generate hope from the past but must set our sights on tomorrow. For it is tomorrow that holds the promise of today's vision and promise of a new world. He writes:

Without a vision for tomorrow, hope is impossible. The past does not generate hope, except for the time when one is reminded of rebellious, daring moments of flight. The past understood as immobilisation of what was, generates longing, even worse, nostalgia, which nullifies tomorrow. Almost always, concrete situations of oppression reduce the oppressed's historical time to an everlasting present of hopelessness and resignation. The oppressed grandchild repeats the suffering of their grandparent. (1998, p. 45)

In our struggle to defeat capital, we must ensure that hope is not left as a metaphysical or mystical abstraction or as an attempt to summon a prelapsarian or preexilian world of unsullied. Hope must be made practical and despair impractical. What is currently lacking among the educational left is what Daniel Bensaïd calls "strategic reason" and the "strategic art of the possible". He writes:

In the art of decision, of the right moment, of the alternatives open to hope, is a strategic art of the possible. Not the dream of an abstract possibility, where everything that isn't impossible will be possible, but the art of a possibility determined by the concrete situation: each situation being

singular, the instant of the decision is always relative to this situation, adjusted to the goal to be achieved. (cited in Callinicos, 2001, p. 55).

The key to resistance, in our view, is to develop a revolutionary critical pedagogy that will enable the working class to discover how the use-value of their labour-power is being exploited by capital but also how working class initiative and power can destroy this type of determination and force a recomposition of class relations by directly confronting capital in all of its multi-faceted dimensions. Efforts must be made to break down capital's control of the creation of a new species of labour-power through current attempts to corporatise and businessify the process of schooling and to resist the endless subordination of life in the social factory so many students call home (Cleaver, 2000; see also Rikowski, 2001c).

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