

Contributions to a Marxist Critical Pedagogy of Becoming: Centering the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*: Part One

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Abstract

Part one: This article is the first part of a project concerned with developing a Marxist critical pedagogy that moves beyond a critique of capital and toward a communist future. The article begins with a brief survey of and intervention in the contemporary historical and political moment as it pertains to the potentiality of a communist pedagogy, which entails a historical-materialist reading of the Soviet Union and actually-existing socialism. The article then introduces Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme, before situating the text within its historical moment and its position in Marx's (and Engels') overall body of thought. In order to do so, some historical and theoretical groundwork is laid, which sets the stage for the second part of the project, which entails an educational reading of Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme.

Keywords: *Marxism, Critical Pedagogy, Gotha Programme, Communist Education, Labor Power, Capital*

Introduction

Over the last decade, and due in no small part to the heightening of contradictions of global capital—expressed succinctly in the rhetoric of the 1 percent versus the 99 percent—there has been a renewed interest in both Marxist educational theory and critical pedagogy. What is most politically promising for revolutionary educators in this renewal is the potential to bridge the two fields. This is particularly important for critical pedagogy, as this field has gradually become domesticated within academic institutions and teacher training programs, being reduced to a “method” of dialogue or an approach to navigating the teacher-student relationship. Yet the conversation is also important for Marxist educational theory, because critical pedagogy places particular

emphasis on the ways in which classrooms and schools relate to, impact, and are determined by broader social and political forces. In this article we contribute to the development of this theoretical and praxical merging by developing a Marxist critical pedagogy of becoming. The bulk of this project, which is divided into two parts, is a reading of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. Although this critique was written in a different historical era, we believe that it offers important guideposts for a critical pedagogy that is oriented toward moving beyond capitalism and toward communism. We do not mine this text in the absurd hope of finding the key to transition, as if capitalism was a stagnant system just waiting to collapse into a higher stage of productive social relations. We are instead concerned with the historical content, relevant points of antagonism with social democrats, and overall purpose and intent of the text. The first part of this project is a survey of the contemporary historico-political moment as it relates to the potentiality for communist educators and the building of a revolutionary movement. Moreover, we lay the theoretical groundwork necessary for understanding Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* in relation to both its historical conditions and its position within Marx's overall body of thought. The second part of this project performs an excavation of this critique as it pertains to developing a Marxist critical pedagogy of becoming communist. At the end of the second part, we delineate six key components of a Marxist critical pedagogy of becoming: a recognition and rejection of anti-communism; an orientation toward the totality of life; an insistence on the connection to global struggles against exploitation and oppression (which includes an evaluation of the class character of these struggles); the utilization of critical, rigorous concepts and formulations; the location of our project within the communist horizon; and the necessity of organization and the Party. This project overall, however, represents only a beginning, and we do not consider the work done here or the proposals articulated to be final or comprehensive.

Communist education in the present

During the 1950s, at the height of Cold War anti-communism, Raya Dunayevskaya risked her reputation and international influence among socialists as a result of breaking from Trotsky to develop what she

considered to be a deeper and wider Marxist humanism. In their Dunayevskaya reader, *The Power of Negativity*, Peter Hudis and Kevin Anderson (2002) note that Dunayevskaya's gradual move away from Trotskyism began early on after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (also referred to as the Hitler-Stalin Pact) of 1939. In the theory of state-capitalism she developed, Dunayevskaya argued that Roosevelt's New Deal, Hitler's Germany, and Stalin's Russia represented variations of the same new stage in global capitalism (Hudis & Anderson, 2002). Her critique of what she called Russia's state capitalism focused on the incompleteness of the revolution and the extent to which communist leaders were in denial of this. In Hegelian terms the Russian revolution had never advanced beyond the first negation, and therefore represented an incomplete dialectical process—never reaching the negation of the negation. Dunayevskaya therefore focused on the subversion of the process of creating socialism, a process far from complete even after the success of the armed struggle (this stage of permanent struggle occupied Paulo Freire's (1998) interest in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*).

Building on Dunayevskaya, Peter Hudis (2012), in his controversial text, *Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism*, argues that the Soviet Union was guilty of the same errors Marx critiqued the socialists of his own time for. Challenging what he considers to be the "traditional" view of socialism that places markets and private property at the center of capitalism, Hudis (2012) argues that such a view stifles the necessary creative imagination to envision and enact a socialism that identifies the self-expansion of value based upon the exploitation of the laborer, the seller of the deceptively magical (i.e., self-expanding) commodity, human labor power, as the central driving force and defining feature of the capitalist mode of production.ⁱ

Educators' labor here, of nearly every variety and type of institution, is responsible for adding the necessary labor hours in the form of schooling and training required by capital to produce laborers whose labor power is useful. This is the contribution of educational labor-power to the reproduction of particular forms of labor-power deemed necessary by the current (and near future) demands of global capital. Yet teachers'

work also includes a crucial ideological component, contributing to the creation of a labor force not only able, but willing, to sell their precious commodity for a wage that represents the value equal to or even less than the value it takes to reproduce the laborer's existence for another day's work, leaving the remainder of the working day, the surplus labor hours, to be appropriated by the capitalist. This latter aspect concerns the role of educational labor-power in maintaining the ideological conditions of the reproduction of capitalist social relations. Because of these two elements, educators are in a strategic position to work toward the subversion of capital in general and against this process of indoctrination in particular. One way in which capital has been militating against this revolutionary potential of educators is by the deprofessionalization and devaluing of educational labor-power through the introduction of online-learning, alternative teacher certification programs, and so on. This, of course, is also the result of capital's internal compulsion for profitability, which drives technological development in the direction of creating ever-more effective labor-saving technologies in order to reduce the proportion of variable capital to constant, and thus to push down the value of labor-power.ⁱⁱ

Returning now to the above critiques of actually-existing socialism, we believe that despite how insightful and significant these critiques are for envisioning and struggling for a post-capitalist future, critiques of the Soviet Union's contradictions and failures should not be disconnected from the larger global context in which they arose. The Bolshevik Revolution, after all, attempted to create socialism not out of a well-developed capitalist economy, but out of an inefficient and highly conservative feudalism with its accompanying backwards social relations. Rather than receiving much needed support from Western powers, the USSR found itself under severe assault. William Blum (2004) situates the ultimate fate of the USSR in the post-WWII era in the following context: "the opportunity to build the war-ravaged world anew, to lay the foundation for peace, prosperity, and justice, collapsed under the awful weight of anti-communism" (p. 7). However, as we will see below, the notion of justice within the context of the logic of capitalism is a cruel deception, alluding to some central shortcomings of Blum's position and of what Hudis (2012) calls *traditional socialism*. However,

the larger context of attempting to create communism in a hostile environment is worth considering. For example, after the success of the Russian Revolution of 1917 the U.S. had sent in troops, 13,000 by 1918, playing a counter-revolutionary role for two years. All in all, 14 imperialist countries sent troops to fight against the first successful workers' revolution. The invaders, the U.S. in particular, worked together with the White Army forces loyal to the former Russian ruling-class, which engaged in a sustained campaign of terror against the revolution. Summarizing the long-term effects of this military intervention Blum (2004) comments:

History does not tell us what a Soviet Union, allowed to develop in a "normal" way of its own choosing, would look like today. We do know, however, the nature of a Soviet Union attacked in its cradle, raised alone in an extremely hostile world, and, when it managed to survive to adulthood, overrun by the Nazi war machine with the blessings of the Western powers. The resulting insecurities and fears have inevitably led to deformities of character not unlike that found in an individual raised in a similar life-threatening manner. (p. 8).

Thus, the Hitler-Stalin pact was implemented because the USSR desperately needed temporary relief from war (and because Stalin knew well that the imperialist powers were planning on allowing the Nazis to use the war machine they had been allowed to build up to crush the Soviets). It was, of course, ultimately the Soviet Union—and 27 million heroic Soviets—that vanquished the Nazi menace, liberating Europe and the death camps.

What is fundamentally important to understand about the U.S. government's objection to, and ultimate attack on, the USSR, is that it was not worried about whether the Soviet Union had actually developed a mode of production that was not based upon the augmentation of value, nor were they concerned about authoritarian elements or crimes being committed against the Russian people, but that it represented, for the first time in history, the image of a worker's state that could possibly inspire American workers and other workers under the U.S.

government's sphere of influence. For U.S. capitalists in 1917 (and before and after) their number one fear was the success of an organized U.S. working class in wresting control of the system of nature from the bourgeoisie. Eugene Deb's 10-year imprisonment for violating the Espionage Act for publicly taking a stand against WWI as the bourgeoisie's global competition for access to resources and markets is best understood in this context. That the working-class threat was real was demonstrated by the fact that from prison Eugene Debs ran for president as a socialist and received nearly half a million votes. The existence of the USSR was thus deeply troubling for Western capitalists, and therefore had to be destroyed. The material and symbolic support that it gave to people's movements (whether socialist or nationalist) throughout its existence radically shifted the global political configuration, catapulting the proletariat and other oppressed classes into leading roles. William Blum (2004) consequently situates the U.S.'s deeply negative anti-communist policies and national culture within this context.

Within this context the state operates as part of the capitalist machine. Despite the external attacks and internal limitations, the Soviet Union and its satellite and allied countries were able to achieve radical successes in raising the standard of living, eliminating unemployment, educating its citizens, and so on. Even at the time of the Soviet Union's collapse a vast majority of Russians continued to support the USSR. While some Marxists argue the end of Soviet communism opened the door for a more fundamentally anti-capitalist anti-capitalism, the decades since have demonstrated clearly that the overthrow of the USSR and the socialist bloc countries represented a *counterrevolutionary* development and a historic setback for oppressed peoples worldwide. Bill Templer (2013), for example, argues that, "the international left needs to look unblinkered at redeemable past socialist achievements, authoritarian elements notwithstanding, a project of demythologizing and building a multi-perspectival and richer empirical semiotics of past and trashed socialist life worlds, a work of memory recovered" (p. 267).

Templer's (2013) charge and work here leaves the possibility open that there remains something to be gained from the USSR's (and Cuba's,

Venezuela's, etc.) past (and present) approaches to education (see also Cole & McLaren, 2013; Hill, 2013). Because the process of expropriating surplus labor divorces or alienates the producers from their product, and therefore tends to separate or alienate mental labor (the thinking part of production) from manual labor, *work* here is but a means to satisfy one's basic needs by consuming the products of other peoples' labor. Socialism, for Marx (outlined below), represents the development of the means of production toward a mode of production that has reunited thinking and doing for producers and therefore overcomes the distinction between labor as a means to satisfy or still one's needs and satisfying basic psychological, human needs in and of itself. A central part of this communist future is eliminating the expropriation of surplus-value since, without it, the capital relation cannot be sustained. This is the ultimate object of our Marxist critical pedagogy of becoming and any insights toward these ends are more than welcome.

More generally, however, despite (or because of) her political dismissals and critiques, Dunayevskaya theoretically pointed to how the development of capitalism leads to deepening and more frequent crises, rendering state intervention (i.e., state-capitalism) to manage this destructive tendency increasingly necessary. Similarly, Mészáros (2011) argues that as capital's structural determinations push it ever closer to apocalyptic destruction, the state is called upon to serve a kind of *hybrid* role regulating production and intervening on behalf of capital's long-term interests. However, Mészáros (2011) is clear that such counteracting tactics might slow down capital's self-destruction, but it cannot resolve or reverse it. The only path for humanity to take to save themselves is to collectively negate capitalism by negating themselves as alienated labor as such. This is the focus of this essay. This is precisely why we are placing Marx's (1875/2002) *Critique of the Gotha Programme* at the center of our project. Supplementing this analysis we also draw on Frederick Engels' (1890/2007) *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, written around the same time as Marx's (1875/2002) *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. At the end of the article, we formulate six elements that are crucial for a Marxist critical pedagogy of becoming.

Beginning where we are: The legacy of the Critique of the Gotha Programme

Taking her cues from Marx, Dunayevskaya's place of departure guiding her philosophical analysis was the concrete conditions of the world she faced. Guiding her strategic vision, as might be expected, was the social movement scene of her time. Her desire was therefore to continue Marx's work in light of the particularities of her own time. This particular *Marxist* approach to Marxian theory and practice is conducive to Marxist critical pedagogy (McLaren, 2005); contributing to a Marxist critical pedagogy requires that we use Marx to better understand the current era and reflect on possible paths toward a socialist alternative. Dunayevskaya (1987/2002) argues that Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* represents one of his more concise outlines of communism (the goal of a Marxist critical pedagogy of becoming):

There is no way, no matter how Marx kept from trying to give any blueprints for the future, not to develop a general view of where we're headed for the day *after* the conquest of power, the day *after* we have rid ourselves of the birthmarks of capitalism *when* a new generation can finally see all its potentiality put an end once and for all to the division between mental and manual labor. (p. 5)

This is certainly a sufficient guiding purpose for a Marxist critical pedagogy—eliminating the primary structural barrier to *becoming* in bourgeois society. In what represents a precursor to this essay, Curry Malott (2014) situated Marx's (1844/1988) critique of Hegel in his philosophic manuscripts at the center. The primary task of this essay is to contribute to this Marxist pedagogy of becoming—*becoming* post-capitalist and communist, that is. Again, Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, written close to the end of his life, and considered one of his great contributions toward building an anti-capitalist movement, constitutes the material out of which these contributions have been constructed.

The Gotha Programme was the program written for the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany in 1875 based upon the work of

the Party's socialist co-founder Ferdinand Lassalle, with whom Marx was fundamentally at odds. Throughout his critique Marx highlights, with rigorous passion, the points in the program that were based on Lassallian principles. In his 1892 Introduction to his then famous short manuscript, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, published in 1880, just five years after Marx's (1875/2002) *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Engels offers an argument against Berlin University professor Dr. Duhring's influential, anti-Marxist approach to socialism. Engels (1880/2007) situates his (and Marx's) position within the historical context of the importance of articulating the parameters of what a socialist alternative to capitalism might be at a time when "the Socialist party in Germany was fast becoming a power" (p. 15). Engels (1880/2007), however, provides an outline of the periodization of capital extending far beyond Germany. Beginning with English feudalism, that is, Engels (1880/2007) argues that the rising, "expansive" commercial power of the class who would become the capitalist class, the feudal middle-class or bourgeoisie, became "...incompatible with the maintenance of the feudal system" and therefore it "had to fall" (p. 27). In the process of manifesting their revolutionary role against feudalism, the bourgeoisie forged a temporary alliance with the peasant class who would become the working-class. The inherent contradictions between these two antagonistically related classes would eventually lead to a long legacy of deepening bitter struggle between them that persists to the present moment. Making this point Engels (1880/2007) comments:

The industrial revolution had created a class of large manufacturing capitalists, but also a class—and a far more numerous one—of manufacturing workpeople. This class gradually increased in numbers, in proportion as the industrial revolution seized upon one branch of manufacturing after another, and in the same proportion it increased in power. This power is proved as early as 1824, by forcing a reluctant Parliament to repeal the acts forbidding combinations of workmen. (p. 36)

Engels (1880/2007) goes on to discuss such concessions (i.e., *combinations of workmen* or unionism) the working-class, conscious of their own size and thus power, forced upon the capitalist class. In

today's perpetually-declining period of capital, such concessions are a thing of the past, but the need for a viable, theoretically sound socialist vision is now more urgent than ever. For example, István Mészáros (2011), writing and speaking since the 1960s, argues that the current crisis of capital, unlike previous crises marked by distinct periods of growth and recovery, such as the Great Depression followed by the post-WWII boom era, is not *cyclical*, but *systemic*, and thus far more serious and permanent, ultimately threatening the survivability of humanity and the natural ecosystems more generally. What is more, Engels (1880/2007) notes how the bourgeoisie quickly realized the need for ideological control, and religion in this instance was a tried and tested mechanism. Today, the need for cultural hegemony is perhaps even more critical from the perspective of the capitalist class.

Again, because it was written as the guiding statement for Germany's socialist movement, and because in our current era, we too need programs for guiding movement out of capital, Marx's (1875/2002) (and Engels', 1880/2007) position offers key insights that can assist laborers in general, and educators in particular, toward these ends. It should be noted that the whereabouts of Marx's original text is unknown. Perhaps it was destroyed. The text we *do* have is of an unknown handwriting, which Engels published in 1891. Despite this unfortunate circumstance, the text Engels published has been widely treated and regarded as Marx's original text.

The Historical and Theoretical Location of Marx's Critique

Engels' argument against utopian socialists offers an important analysis to help situate Marx's (1875/2002) critique in a contemporary context. For example, Engels (1880/2007) argues that the utopians' response to the immiseration engendered by early capitalism demonstrated their lack of understanding of the internal logic of capital. Consider:

The socialism of earlier days certainly criticized the existing capitalistic mode of production and its consequences. But it could not explain them and therefore could not get mastery of them. It could only simply reject them as bad. The more strongly this earlier

socialism denounced the exploitation of the working class, inevitable under capitalism, the less able was it clearly to show in what this exploitation consisted and how it arose. (p. 70)

Critical pedagogy, in the present era, without Marx, suffers from exactly this shortsightedness. Because mainstream critical pedagogy and some of its post-structural variants begin by rejecting Marx, critical pedagogy tends to be based on simplistic understandings of social class that stress the consequences of capitalism, such as poverty, inequality—and in education, educational inequality—without grasping the internal logic and driving force of capitalism. Marx (1867/1967) lays this out clearly in volume 1 of *Capital*. At its most basic level capitalism emerged out of feudalism with a subtle yet profound shift from feudalism's form of simple exchange (i.e., C—M—C) to capitalism's more advanced form of circulation where *money begets money* (i.e., M—C—M'). As the division of labor developed under feudalism a system of simple exchange became necessary to facilitate the distribution of useful products because a tailor cannot eat pants and a farmer cannot wear wheat. Simple exchange begins with a portion of the producer's product, which is exchanged for an equivalent value in the form of money, and then exchanged for an equivalent sum of another producer's product for consumption. No new value is created in this process, which is why the production of use-values is the primary focus. The feudal Lords' accumulation of the producers' surplus labor was therefore limited by direct local consumption. The initial emergence of capitalism did not require, as a prerequisite, the demise of the feudal lords. Unlike feudalism that begins with the producer's product, (and mercantilism that begins with the merchant's pocket, his money, which is advanced for an equivalent sum of commodities, and then sold dearer), capital properly begins with the capitalist setting into motion the means of production and labor-power and, in the process, producing surplus-value.

According to Marx, what the bourgeois economists and socialists did not fully comprehend was the logic behind the *appearance* that money can create more money within a market system based upon the theoretical or ideological exchange of equivalents. That is, money serves the role of exchanging products of various qualities (i.e., pants and bread or, to use

one of Marx's examples, a bible into whiskey) into a certain quantity of a common denominator (i.e., labor hours) so they can be traded. If the law of the market is based upon the theory of fair exchange, then how does the merchant or industrialist consistently and systematically augment capital and become a capitalist? That is, how is the exploitation of labor power hidden within the process of production? Marx (1867/1967) explains this by differentiating between constant capital and variable capital.

Constant capital is the means of production and raw and auxiliary materials. He calls them constant because they create no new value—the value put in is roughly the same value that comes out (save a portion of the raw material that might be wasted through the production process itself). Variable capital, on the other hand, stands for the value of labor-power as represented through wages (which is the price of labor-power, and will fluctuate in relation to labor-power's actual value). It is labor-power that produces all values, including the value of the means of production and raw and auxiliary materials used in the production process. Labor power, when set in motion and combined with constant capital to produce useful products, has the ability to create more value than what was advanced to purchase its use—but how? Labor-power adds value in two ways: first, by transforming the elements of production into a commodity (congealed labor-power); second, by preserving the value of the means of production.

Commodities have both use-values and exchange-values. Use-values are concrete, objective entities. Exchange-value, on the other hand, is immaterial and therefore social. Under simple exchange a commodity's exchange-value serves primarily the function of facilitating the distribution of use-values. Money arises precisely as a means of exchange to lubricate this process. The deceptively subtle shift in capitalism, on the other hand, subordinates commodity's use-values to their exchange-value. For example, in *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* David Harvey (2014) reflects on the tendency toward crisis that results from the ways in which use-value and exchange-value are "at odds with each other" (p. 15). Harvey (2014) uses the example of a house, whose use-values are endless, from raising a family to

engaging in illicit activities. But in order to access a house's use-values, a certain amount of exchange-value, in the contemporary world, tends to be required. In the case of speculators investing in the fluctuating values of housing for the appropriation of exchange-value (i.e., profit), the use-value of housing can be subverted for millions of people. Making this point Harvey (2014) notes that, "in the recent property market crash in the United States, about 4 million people lost their homes through foreclosure. For them, the pursuit of exchange-value destroyed access to housing as a use-value" (p. 21). Harvey (2014) expands this analysis and observes that, "the same thing happens to health care and education (higher education in particular) as exchange-value considerations increasingly dominate the use-value aspects of social life" (p. 23). While commodities, such as houses and college degrees, are wealth, it is not labor alone that creates commodities. As a commodity itself, labor capacity has both a use-value and an exchange-value. Summarizing this analysis Marx (1867/1967) notes:

At first sight a commodity presented itself to us as a complex of two things—use-value and exchange-value. Later on, we saw also that labor, too, possesses the same two-fold nature; for, so far as it finds expression in value, it does not possess the same characteristics that belong to it as a creator of use-values. I was the first to point out and to examine critically this two-fold nature of the labor contained in commodities. (p. 41)

This two-fold nature of commodities is what allowed simple exchange to develop with the division of labor. Marx (1867/1967) explains the way the capitalist exploits the two-fold nature of the commodity through his labor theory of value. Marx (1867/1967) argues that the value of labor is determined by the average, minimum cost it takes to reproduce the laborer for another days work. Lets say, as Marx does, that it takes 6 hours of labor to reproduce the value of one's daily existence. Any additional hours of labor power expenditure is therefore surplus and consequently represents the self-expansion of capital. Commodities are therefore depositories of labor and thus value.

The magical expansion of value that occurs when the circulation equation of feudalistic simple exchange is reversed from C—M—C (commodity, money, commodity), which does not imply “a change in the magnitude of value” (Marx, 1867/1967, p. 158), just a transformation of form, to M—C—M (money, commodity, money), cannot be explained by circulation or distribution. That is, shifting around the value that has already been created does not explain where value comes from. Again, what this suggests is that value cannot be augmented or expanded in circulation, and it cannot be augmented without circulation or without coming into contact with other buyers and sellers of commodities. However, the commodity that the laborer has to sell is the most essential commodity to the capitalist because it is the one commodity that is endowed with the capability of self-expanding value, as explained above. If the capitalist received no more value for the purchased labor power than what is represented by his investment, then no expansion of value would occur. That is, if the laborer only worked as long as it takes to reproduce his or her own existence, no new value would be created. The following summary of the driving motivation behind the capitalist is instructive for comprehending the augmentation of value:

As the conscious representative of this movement, the possessor of money becomes a capitalist. His person, or rather his pocket, is the point from which the money starts and to which it returns. The expansion of value, which is the objective basis or main-spring of the circulation M—C—M, becomes his subjective aim, and it is only in so far as the appropriation of ever more and more wealth in the abstract becomes the sole motive of his operations, that he functions as a capitalist, that is, as capital personified and endowed with consciousness and a will...The restless never-ending process of profit-making alone is what he aims at. (Marx, 1867/1967, pp. 152-153)

If expended human labor deposited within useful products as a result of the labor process is the true source of capital's self-expansion, then, as a result of this never-ending chain of transactions, capital *consumes* labor. Labor power is consumed in the production process; through this it is set in motion, that is, compelled to work and thus expend itself, to

use itself up, transferring its own subjectivity into the objects of production. The labor process is therefore a process of productive consumption in which labor and materials are consumed as a result of working. Individual consumption is distinct from productive consumption. Individual consumption is a means of survival with the result being the consumer, a mere expenditure or using up of existing value. Productive consumption, on the other hand, has as the result “a product distinct from the consumer” (Marx, 1867/1967, p. 183), and the goal is self-expansion. In individual consumption the act of consumption is a finality, while in productive consumption self-expansion is potentially endless.

In the labor process the laborer’s labor is constantly in a state of transformation. Before being purchased, or before the capitalist employs the laborer on credit (to be paid after the labor act is complete (the laborer is still; the act of laboring is a potential. Once set in motion the laborers’ potential to labor is now labor in action. Gradually, the labor in motion becomes motionless as it becomes embodied in a use-value, “the thing produced” (Marx, 1867/1967, p. 189). The teacher, when teaching, is consuming, expending, or using up her labor power. At the end of a period of education, the educator’s labor capacity becomes motionless and embodied within the now educated or credentialized students, or particular useful forms of labor-power. This process is essentially the same regardless of whether the educator is laboring in a public system and therefore producing future laborers and thus future value, or is laboring in a privatized system where their labor is creating both future labor-power and thus indirect value, and direct value as a service consumed by laborers seeking to increase the value of their labor capacity.ⁱⁱⁱ

Because of the self-expansive quality of labor power represented within the notion of variable capital, there exists a rate of exploitation or the rate at which capital is augmented. Marx (1867/1967) observes that this ratio is determined by dividing surplus-value by variable capital, which he calls the “rate of surplus-value” (p. 216). However, Marx (1867/1967) notes how bourgeois economists calculate the rate of profit by combining constant capital and variable capital, significantly downplaying and diminishing the rate of exploitation that tends to exist

within capitalist production, due, in part, to the cut-throat competition between capitalists, each striving to increase his respective rate of profit by any means necessary. In this way, capitalism is actually mystified for capital and labor, as Marx (1894/1981) writes that this appearance “completely conceals the true nature and origin of profit, not only for the capitalist, who has here a particular interest in deceiving himself, but also for the worker” (p. 268). The working day therefore consists of two elements, the first, that portion of the day that goes toward what is necessary to reproduce the value of keeping oneself alive to work another day, and the other part of the day, surplus labor, which comprises the basis of the creation of new value, as outlined above. Socially-necessary labor is the result of historical and moral elements (i.e., class struggle). The struggle over the working day is a struggle over the values produced and to whom, or more accurately, which class, these values will accrue.

The capitalist’s compulsion to extend the working day in absolute and relative terms is, from the perspective of the capitalist, fair and in compliance with the laws of market exchange (i.e., the exchange of equivalents), reasons Marx (1867/1967), because the value of labor power is assumed to be based upon the average amount of labor hours it takes to reproduce the laborers’ physical, objective existence (i.e., the share of social product, or social wealth, needed to keep the laborer alive for another day), and the capitalist, it is assumed, pays this amount to the laborer in exchange for his labor. However, because the laborer is compelled to work beyond the time it takes to create the value to replace her own existence, from her perspective, she is being cheated out of her own surplus labor. Since both parties, the capitalist and the laborer, have legitimate claims within market logic, and since the interests of labor and capital are antagonistically related, Marx (1867/1967) notes that ultimately, “between equal rights force decides” (p. 235). Summarizing the view of labor here regarding these two mutually exclusive perspectives Marx (1867/1967) offers a key insight for our critical pedagogy of becoming:

The commodity that I have sold to you differs from the crowd of other commodities, in that its use creates value, and value greater

than its own. That is why you bought it. That which on your side appears a spontaneous expansion of capital, is on mine extra expenditure of labor. You and I know on the market only one law, that of exchange of commodities. And the consumption of the commodity belongs not to the seller who parts with it, but to the buyer, who acquires it. To you, therefore, belongs the use of my daily labor power. But by means of the price that you pay for it each day, I must be able to reproduce it daily, and to sell it again...I will each day spend, set in motion, put into action only as much of it as is compatible with its normal duration, and healthy development. By an unlimited extension of the working-day, you may in one day use up a quantity of labor power greater than I can restore in three. What you gain in labor I lose in substance...You pay me for one day's labor-power, whilst you use that of three days. That is against our contract and the law of exchanges. I demand, therefore, a working day of normal length, and I demand it without any appeal to your heart, for in money matters sentiment is out of place. You may be a model citizen, perhaps a member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals...; but the thing that you represent face to face with me has no heart in its breast. That which seems to throb there is my own heart beating. I demand the normal working-day because I, like every other seller, demand the value of my commodity. (pp. 233-234)

It is critical to note that this is where Marx (1867/1967) introduces the laborer as poised against capital—poised not as a revolutionary agent yet, but as a voice for fairness within the laws of exchange, which implies the exchange of equivalents. This approach fits within Marx's dialectical conception of historical change as a developmental process. Capitalism, that is, did not magically appear as feudalism vanished, but developed out of the social and economic structures that existed, as perpetually developing entities, within feudalistic society (with, of course, a violent process of primitive accumulation, a struggle over the state, etc.). The paradigmatic shift from exchanging commodities for money to access other commodities for consumption to exchanging money for commodities for money first emerged within the means of production and division of labor as they existed in late-feudalism. Marx's place of

departure for developing a theory out of capital therefore necessarily begins with the exploitation of the laborer, which could not be done until the secret of how value is augmented through capitals' M—C—M circulation process was brought to the surface and uncovered.

The longer the capitalist can compel the laborer to labor beyond the time it takes to reproduce her own existence, in other words, the higher the rate of the capitalists' return on his labor power investment. The longer the laborer works, the more value absorbed by raw material and subsequently transformed into useful products. When these values are compared what is revealed is the rate of exploitation. If the value of labor and the value it creates are equal, then no new value would have been created. But new value is created and stored within the bodies it is transferred into. Once sold on the market its value is finally realized and money therefore has been transformed into capital and accumulated as such, adding more value to the sum of capital to be invested to continue the process of self-expansion. The laborer, as a consequence of not having direct access to the means of production, has to exchange her labor for a wage to survive, and thus trembles when no buyer can be found. However, the more the laborer labors, the more surplus-value his labor creates thereby increasing the wealth and thus domination of capital over the producer and the production process.

However, it is important to stress that the shift from feudalism's simple exchange to the aforementioned insatiable drive to accumulate surplus-value represents perhaps an even more subtle, yet profound, shift than has yet been suggested. Making this point Marx (1867/1967) stresses that "capital has not invented surplus-labor" (p. 235). Surplus-value, reasons Marx (1867/1967), is present in any society where a "part of society" owns the greater part of the means of production, and laborers, "free or not free," must provide the "working time" necessary for their own "maintenance" and "extra" labor hours for the "maintenance" of the "owners" (p. 235).^{iv} The difference resides in the fact that only in capitalism is the commodity's exchange-value given primacy over its use-value. In feudalism, for example, the accumulation of surplus-labor hours was limited by how many use-values could be consumed by the laborers and by the feudal nobility/owners. In pre-capitalist societies

laborers are therefore rarely over-worked or worked to death because production itself without consumption does not foster “a boundless thirst for surplus-labor” (Marx, 1867/1967, p. 235). The exception was when labor was directed at producing “exchange-value in its specific independent money-form; in the production of gold and silver” (Marx, 1867/1967, p. 235). In other words, Marx notes that before the capitalist era the only example of laborers being worked to death was in the mining of gold and silver, which is basically the process of digging up money or direct exchange-value.

Offering another example Marx (1867/1967) turns to American slavery in the antebellum south. Before the invention of the cotton-gin, a piece of labor-saving technology that dramatically increased the efficiency of the tedious work of processing cotton, which involves removing the seeds from the fibers, southern slavery was directed at “immediate local consumption” and therefore focused on use-values. With the ability to dramatically decrease the amount of slave labor hours needed to process a given quantity of cotton, the profitability of slavery skyrocketed and led to an intensified engagement with the international market. This development led to a barbaric and deadly shift: “it was no longer a question of obtaining from him a certain quantity of useful products. It was now a question of the production of surplus-labor itself” (Marx, 1867/1967, p. 236). As a result, the whole of the south was transformed into a vast region of cotton fields, and it became more profitable to work slaves to death than to take care of them into old age. It also became more profitable to use up fields rather than rotate crops and conserve the resource, and thus employ the military to push Native American nations west and expand slave territory. It is no wonder why there was so much push back against a conception of freedom after the abolition of slavery in the US in 1865 based upon an agrarian land reform that might be thought of as a mild form of reverse-primitive accumulation. The transition from actual slavery to wage slavery was therefore assisted by a form of capitalist education, but was nevertheless a relatively easy transition even though there was significant push back from former slaves who knew all too well that being compelled to sell their labor to their former masters represented anything but freedom.

The horrors that paved the way for the African slave trade in the Americas, we must not fail to mention, began with the actions of a slave and gold hungry Christopher Columbus. As a deep economic crisis internal to the feudalistic economy was driving a spike in the heart of feudalism, the top of its hierarchy, the Catholic Church located in Rome, Italy was desperate for wealth, which influenced its decision to fund, and expectations for, Christopher Columbus' voyages. After landing in present day Haiti and the Dominican Republic in 1492, Columbus was impressed with the generosity and warmth of the local Arawak communities, which led him to conclude that it would be easy to subjugate their entire nation, numbering in the millions, with just a handful of men. Columbus returned to Spain with around two hundred captives to prove the success of his wealth-seeking mission. However, in the process, he also exaggerated the presence of gold, the one substance people had been worked to death for in non-capitalist economies. Upon returning to the Western hemisphere Columbus and the colonists did not hesitate to employ their barbaric weapons and war culture upon the heads of the Arawak setting deadly consequences for failing to make regular payments in gold to the conquistadors. Because of the Arawaks' lack of knowledge concerning the whereabouts of veins of gold, they suffered horrific consequences such as having feet and hands removed. Of course the Arawak attempted to resist, but without a well-developed theory of, and tools for, war, their efforts were pitiful. The Spanish responded with brutal savagery and slaughtered the Arawak mercilessly. In a handful of genocidal decades, highlighted by massive waves of death brought by the silent plague of small pox and other highly infectious and deadly diseases, to which the Arawak had no built-up immunity. Their numbers would be reduced to nearly nothing leading to a need, from an investors' point of view, for additional supplies of labor power, and the African slave trade, which Columbus had already been engaged in, fit the bill. Citing a British economists' comparison of the severity of exploitation during capitalism's early and unregulated era to the genocide of Native Americans to highlight the seriousness of the former, Marx (1867/1967) does not shy away from the severity of the topic he is exploring:

We have hitherto considered the tendency to the extension of the working-day, the were-wolf's hunger for surplus-labor in a department where the monstrous exactions, not surpassed, says an English bourgeois economist, by the cruelties of the Spaniards to the American red-skins, caused capital at last to be bound by the chains of legal regulations. (p. 243)

While Marx's point here is well taken—that the unregulated drive for surplus-value, central to the logic of capital, is as deadly as the chief moments of primitive accumulation were (and continue to be)—the genocide of entire nations of Native Americans, the contemporary survivors of which are among the most oppressed and impoverished people in the Americas, should not be diminished or understated. Marx's (1867/1967) next examples focused on “the branches of production” where “the exploitation of labor is...free from fetters” (p. 243) is nevertheless insightful in terms of the savagery the accumulation of surplus-value fosters when unregulated or when allowed to pursue its true spirit or intent. For example, in Nottingham, even as late as the 1860s, young children as young as nine years old were commonly dragged from their squalid beds at two or three in the morning and forced to work until nine or ten o'clock at night. In Nottingham, argues Marx, laborers actually petitioned to have the workday reduced to eighteen hours for adults. In these dehumanizing conditions the humanity of the laborers dissipated as they were more valuable quickly used up and replaced, than kept alive by reducing the length of the workday. In his discussion Marx (1867/1967) cites reports that compare this “slow death” of over-working to the American slavers' use of the lash to control their human property as roughly equivalent in cruelty and deadliness. Marx (1867/1967) discusses many examples of how unregulated capital, from bread makers in London to Dublin, to potters and tailors lead to the premature death and exhaustion from over-work in order to demonstrate that “before capital all men are alike” (p. 253). Capital's main drive is the cold, calculating accumulation of surplus-labor's exchange-value and is therefore indifferent to what happens in between the initial capital investment and its augmentation.

However, this is not to suggest that all people have fared equally or have been equally exploited since Marx's time. For example, we know that a fundamental ideological and material bourgeois tool to keep labor unorganized and divided has been, for example, racialization, so the continuum of oppression among the working class is mediated by race, as well as by ethnicity, gender, sexuality, home language, nation of origin, etc. As a result, in the contemporary context, people of European descent, as a whole, tend to be the most privileged component of the working-class. In this context we might describe white privilege as a bribe, if you will, to keep white workers obedient and feeling guilty for their privilege and in conflict with less privileged workers of color. However, as suggested above, concessions are only ever advanced when capital is compelled to do so by the force of labor threatening rebellion. At its heart the drive of capital is to consume the fullness of what labor is able to produce. Making this point Marx (1867/1967) notes how "extending the working day can never still, once and for all time, the restlessness of capital because its inherent tendency is to appropriate labor during all the 24 hours of the day" (p. 256).

The transformative property of variable capital, activated by the raising or lowering of the length of the working day (regardless of what unit of measure the capitalist employs, such as the hourly wage, the yearly wage, or the daily wage) necessarily remains hidden below the surface *operating behind the backs of producers*, as it were. Making this point Marx (1867/1967) observes how "surplus-labor and necessary labor glide into one another" (p. 236). This more or less hidden flexibility of variable capital has over time proven to serve the capitalist well during times of crisis. That is, when business is bad, the length of the working day can be extended through various measures such as lowering the hourly wage, forcing, in effect, laborers to work more hours to reproduce their own existence. It is not uncommon for wages to be suppressed to below basic subsistence levels, or below what is necessary to replace what was expended during the labor process. During such times of crisis, which now seems to be the normal, permanent state of late-capitalism, laborers become more and more aware of how they are being exploited. The surface appearance of poverty next to opulence is not hard to detect. What is more difficult to uncover is the specific way

value is augmented capitalistically, how it emerged historically, and what it might develop into provided a sufficiently critically conscious working-class agency.

In the next part of this essay, we turn to a reading of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* in an effort to develop the beginnings of a Marxist critical pedagogy of becoming that is both situated in and oriented toward the communist horizon.

ⁱ Essentially, Hudis (2012) argues that the Soviet Union was based upon the belief that abolishing private property and instituting a state-planned economy would lead to socialism because capitalism is based on private property and private ownership. Consequently, Hudis argues that the Soviet Union, and traditional socialism in general, leaves the real internal logic of capital unaddressed and thus unchallenged.

Hudis (2012) comments at length regarding the frequency of this misreading of Marx. In explaining the difference between circulation and exchange in feudalism and in capitalism in volume 1 of *Capital* Marx (1867/1967) notes that the first instances of the merchant transforming money into capital took place within the mode of production as it existed in feudalism, which was possible because of the advanced development of the division of labor and the circulation of commodities through simple exchange in feudalism. The insatiable drive for surplus labor hours has driven the development of the mode of production, which led to the ongoing examples of primitive accumulation such as the expropriation of the peasant from the soil and thus private property. Again, for Hudis (2012), a socialist alternative informed by the abolition of private property, traditionally, has missed the defining characteristic of capitalism, and thus has not subverted capitalism, or the process of expanding value capitalistically. Hudis' (2012) challenge here complements Glenn Rikowski's argument that an anti-capitalist pedagogy must place labor power at the center since it is labor power as a commodity that capitalism sets in motion to augment value (discussed below). It is within this context that a Marxist pedagogy of becoming begins to take shape and offer insights to guide direction. In this regard Rikowski identifies the human subject, the laborer, as capital's weakest link since the augmentation of capital cannot happen without the one commodity possessed by the laborer, labor power, which exists within the laborer as a potential that is realized once set in motion and combined with the means of production to produce commodities.

ⁱⁱ Marx (1867/1967) explores this aspect of capital when asking how might the surplus-labor accumulated in a given days work be extended without extending the length of the working day. The first solution Marx explores is by reducing the amount of the day dedicated to necessary labor. This is done by decreasing wages, or not paying labor the full value of her labor-power, thereby denying her a portion of the necessities required for daily existence, such as food and shelter, consequently, subverting, "the proper reproduction of his labor-power" (p. 314). While Marx (1867/1967) acknowledges that this plays an "important part...of actual practice" (p. 314), his objective is to show how surplus labor can be increased without extending

the length of the working day or by robbing the laborer of what is necessary by reducing wages. The solution, as suggested above, is to increase the productiveness of labor, which requires that the “mode of production and the labor process itself, must be revolutionized” (Marx, 1867/1967, p. 314). With labor saving technologies, then, the laborer can turn more constant capital into useful products in the same amount of time. As a result, the laborer can reproduce the value of his or her own existence in a shorter period of time. The cost of reproducing the daily existence of labor is therefore reduced. Given that the length of the working day has remained the same, and the cost of reproducing one's existence has remained the same, the amount of the working day dedicated to the reproduction of labor is shortened with the increase in the productiveness of labor. Outside of inventing new use-values, this is one of the primary directions and central foci of technological development within capitalist society. Marx points to an important contradiction here: as capital seeks to increase the mass of surplus-value by setting more and more variable capital (i.e., laborers) in motion, it simultaneously seeks to reduce the amount of labor power set in motion through increasing productivity. The result is crisis and growing immiseration outlined in a related essay (Malott, 2014).

Kelsh (2013) notes how bourgeois ideology distorts this devaluing of labor power in an economic sense by turning it into a cultural value where the laborer her or himself is devalued. In a Marxist sense, then, this is where internalized oppression stems from in capitalist society and helps explain how and why laborers are socialized to romanticize and idolize the capitalist. However, such a critical pedagogy is never about challenging ideas alone, but is part of the larger struggle against the concrete material conditions that are the consequences of the capitalistic mode of production.

ⁱⁱⁱ Making the way the various parts of the production process interact with one another even more transparent Marx distinguishes between constant capital and variable capital, which is perhaps worth briefly revisiting here. Constant capital, as noted above, is the means of production, such as machinery and raw material. Again, Marx refers to it as constant because it is not able to produce new value. The value constant capital puts in, let's say the student, is the same quantity of value that reemerges in the final product at the end of production. Making this point Marx (1867/1967) notes that “the means of production can never add more value to the product than they themselves possess independently of the process in which they exist” (p. 205). Even if the price of constant capital fluctuates, as it often does, it is due to social processes that are separate from the production process, such as advances in labor saving technologies.

Variable capital, as mentioned above, can only come from labor power and is variable because it refers to the new capital only labor power can produce when mixed with constant capital. In other words, unlike the means of production, labor power “undergoes an alteration of value” (Marx, 1867/1967, p. 209). Variable capital, for Marx (1867/1967), is able to both “reproduce the equivalent of its own value” and “produce an excess, a surplus-value” (p. 209). The quantity of new value created during a given period of production may not vary at all, so it may seem strange to refer to it as *variable*, but by *variable* Marx refers to how *variable capital* “undergoes a process” (Marx, 1867/1967, p. 214) or a transformation. The proportion of variable capital (i.e., labor power) to constant capital (i.e., raw materials) may fluctuate

enormously due to many social factors external to the production process, but such shifts do not affect at all the difference between them. Constant capital will never create new value, but variable capital cannot augment value without it. In other words, referring to constant capital, Marx (1867/1967) notes, “as regards the means of production, what is really consumed is their use-value, and the consumption of this use-value by labor results in the product” (p. 207).

^{iv} Moreover, *surplus* generally is an integral aspect of any society (to deal with means of production or subsistence that do not yield useful effects for a long time, to deal with natural disasters, etc.).

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