

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

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ABSTRACT

Part two: This article is the second 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 performs an educational reading of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* in order to delineate what a Marxist critical pedagogy of becoming communist might look like. The reading is not, of course, an attempt to find some key to the transition to communism. While the historical specificity of the text is attended to, the authors find certain guideposts in Marx's critique that can help revolutionary educators think and act through the contemporary crisis of capitalism. At the end of the article, the authors delineate six key components of a Marxist critical pedagogy of becoming.

Keywords: *Marxism, Critical Pedagogy, Communist Education, Labor Power, Capital, Educational Theory*

The Critique of the Gotha Programme and Critical Pedagogy

In this part of our project, we perform an educational reading of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* to ask how it can inform a Marxist critical pedagogy oriented toward the development of communism. At the end of this article, 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.

As with the socialists critiqued by Marx and Engels, critical pedagogy today focuses on the readily visible consequences of capital (i.e., issues of exchange and distribution) without grasping its internal logic, which plays a *structurally determining* role in its historical development. Paula Allman, Peter McLaren, and Glenn Rikowski (2005) have referred to this as the “box-people” approach. In this approach, social class is determined by checking boxes with varying levels of income, consumption power, social status, and so on. The focus on the consequences of capital also fails to grasp the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic manifestations of human agency mediating capital’s transformation through time and space. Again, Marx’s body of work offers crucial insights for correcting these shortcomings. However, as suggested above, contrary to Marx’s time, capitalism today is in a descending phase, which requires some updating. Despite this disclaimer, the key insights and arguments of Marx (and Engels) remain relevant. Within the context of the savagery of capitalism’s internal logic and drive that Marx (1867/1967) so painstakingly uncovers in volume 1 of *Capital*, his *Critique of Gotha Programme* as pointing to a post-capitalist future takes on its full urgency and vitality.

Marx’s (1875/2002) critique is thorough, systematic, and relentless. He begins his assault attacking the programs’ very first sentence that claims that *labor is the source of all wealth*. In response Marx (1875/2002) argues that:

Nature is just as much the source of use values (and it is surely of such that material wealth consists!) as is labor, which is itself only the manifestation of a natural force, human labor power. (p. 3)

What Marx (1875/2002) is rallying against is an analysis that disconnects humanity from what he identifies as *the system of nature* (Marx, 1844/1988), which is the source of the objects of our need, and without it, life cannot exist. What is more, the entire basis for capitalistic wealth is based upon the expropriation of the laborer from the soil, from nature (Marx, 1867/1967). That is, capitalism cannot function without a working-class who have no direct access to land, to nature, and thus, out of necessity, must sell their capacity to work for a wage—one of the primary sources of both exploitation and permanent alienation. Making this point in his critique Marx (1875/1988) essentially charges the Gotha Programme with failing to break with bourgeois ideology:

The bourgeoisie have very good grounds for fancifully ascribing *supernatural creative power* to labor, since it follows precisely from the fact that labor depends on nature, that the man who possesses no other property than his labor power must, in all conditions of society and culture, be the slave of other men who have made themselves the owners of the material conditions of labor. He can only work with their permission, and hence only live with their permission. (p. 3)

What this points to is a critical pedagogy focused on developing a critical consciousness and gaining control over one's creative capacities or labor power, thereby ending the appropriation of surplus labor hours, but not as an end in itself, but as part of the process of liberating the system of nature from the bourgeois' monopolistic control. With this in mind, it is worth reflecting on what this might mean for public education. In the spirit of showing students what this might look like in practice, it is not enough to challenge the neoliberal privatization of public education, as tends to be the focus in the United States, for it does nothing to subvert the way in which *the system of nature* is being held hostage against the majority and plundered for wealth extraction through the command and domination of society's collective labor power (despite a long, ongoing tradition of working-class resistance). In Malott's experience working with a relatively small group of activist-educators employed by the

Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) who are active members of their union, the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties (APSCUF), it is a difficult task just convincing their colleagues on their own campus that privatization is neither good nor inevitable. The challenge of building a campus-wide movement to challenge capital itself remains a daunting task.

However, the leap from challenging privatization, or the intensification of capitals' appropriation, to questioning the viability of capital, is not a far one. The logic is simple enough: If more unrestricted capitalism is undesirable, then no capitalism must be best. If this is so, then what exactly is it about capitalism that is so unwelcome? And what might an alternative look like and how might we realize it? These discussions, touched on throughout this essay, can and should be had (see Hudis, 2012). In short then, what exists as a counter movement to capital in the U.S. tends to be focused on resisting neoliberalism, but not capital itself. Again, putting the difficulty here in content, it is worth restating that building support for a movement against privatizing public education is not easy outside of small critical pedagogy and socialist circles. Marx's challenge for a socialist alternative represented in this essay offers a vision of the future, properly articulated through a collective movement, we believe, would be widely accepted despite the many ideological challenges. For example, Noam Chomsky has made frequent reference to the fact that many Americans who self-identify with pro-capitalist politics, such as those associated with the Democrats, Republicans, and the Tea Party, when questioned on specific policy issues, actually support a program quite far to the left, including universal healthcare, livable wage mandates, and free universal education.

Outside of the United States, however, global neoliberal trends seem to be met with more resistance. Offering powerful insights and descriptions of the concrete context of neoliberal attacks on

public education in Greece, the soil out of which the resistance movement there has grown, Leonidas Vatikiotis and Maria Nikolakaki (2013) explain:

Under the Memorandum regime that requires the citizens of Greece to pay back an alleged and unscrutinized debt, social services such as education and health care have been significantly reduced...The aim is to make public education a free market...reduce curriculum to basic math and literacy content that workers will need to compete for low-paid jobs...This is part of a global project. Debt makes it seem inescapable...Targeting and scapegoating teachers is one of the means of neoliberalism in this global project...Taking the spirit out of the souls of the teachers is a primary goal of debtocracy. Cuts in education in Greece include cuts in teachers' salaries up to 40%. As a result, teachers are living at the edge of poverty and are demoralized. (pp. 142-143)

Vatikiotis & Nikolakaki (2013), however, report many examples of teacher resistance, despite an inability to push back crippling austerity measures. At the university level, however, students and professors have achieved some notable victories, despite some crushing losses:

In Greece, education is free. All universities are public, and the privatization of higher education is forbidden by the constitution. Even so, the previous governments of Greece attempted to amend the constitution to allow for private universities and to facilitate a radical change in the framework of the public universities to allow private enterprises to fund public education. All of these plans failed because of the massive protests by students and staff that erupted in the spring of 2006 and the winter of 2007. It was a victory...as the government...still...cannot demand fees from students for higher education. (Vatikiotis & Nikolakaki, 2013, p. 145)

However, through a series of intimidation tactics and political coercion in the face of massive student and faculty resistance, Greece's democratic university governance structure was radically altered imposing corporate-dominated Administrative Councils

charged with high-level decision making. Like elementary and secondary educators, university professors have also experienced the crushing blows of 40% budget cut situations. The response to the corporate take-over and defunding of higher education in Greece was decisive, “more than 300 university departments were occupied by students for more than a month” (Vatikiotis & Nikolakaki, 2013, p. 150). While these massive actions were not able to reverse what was lost, they produced many experienced revolutionaries who will likely lead future campaigns. Strikingly similar courageous acts of resistance have flourished across the world. In Britain, for example, university students have responded to austerity with direct action militancy. Consider:

...In early 2010, a handful of universities began to introduce cuts to particular departments and disciplines to which students responded. Perhaps most notable was the occupation of Middlesex University during April and May 2010 in response to the university’s decision to close its philosophy department...Prior to autumn 2010 there were also strikes at London Metropolitan University, whose Vice Chancellor had claimed government funds for fictitious students; in response the university cut academic jobs and strikes ensued. (Canaan, Hill, & Maisuria, 2013, p. 183)

Given the global nature of capitalism, and thus the global nature of the crisis, we would expect to find resistance wherever austerity measures have cut public services, such as education. The situation is similar in Turkey where:

Neoliberal and neo-conservative education policies implemented after 1990 faced very significant resistance by dissident teacher unions, especially university students, academic staff and some political parties. It should be noted that this opposition was organized at the grassroots level, and was characterized by rigorous commitment to democratic principles. (Inal and Öztürk, 2013, p. 211)

Similarly, but focused on Ireland, Michael O’Flynn, Martin J. Power, Conor McCabe, and Henry Silke (2013) make profound

observations regarding the global financial crisis, its negative effects, and the existence of widespread resistance:

We draw attention to the nature of the Irish boom, to the specific character of the subsequent crash, highlighting the conditions that permitted the financial interest to effectively close ranks, transferring private debt to the general population. Whilst acknowledging the apparently low level of resistance to all of this, we reject the notion that the population has meekly accepted all of the related cuts and impositions. We show that the apparent submission to the austerity agenda is quite deceptive, that forms of resistance are emerging everywhere, not least in education, and that these represent the potential for the development of a mass movement against austerity in the years ahead. (p. 164)

A closer examination of the emerging movements around the world would surely reveal similar sentiments regarding the existence of a similar mass movement simmering just beneath the surface of superficial consent. Activating this potential is the challenge of our critical pedagogy of becoming. Toward these ends, Vatikiotis and Nikolakaki (2013) summarize their vision for future resistance in Greece:

The most crucial area where this response will be judged is that of demands, which concentrates the political direction and the content of the struggle. Against this strategic attack of capital, there is an imminent need for a program of demands that could relieve the social majority. Each of these demands could be realized today under pressure from the social movements, but they cannot be realized as a whole while the demands exist as a radical program of claims and are not in synch with today's system. Their common character is that they challenge the power of capital; they are aggressive and they are in a position to improve the situation of the working and middle classes. These demands are: creation of payments and the abolition of the debt, exit from the Eurozone and the European Union, nationalization of banks and of firms of strategic importance, increases in wages, salaries, and pensions, and the empowerment of the public sphere. The adoption by the labor movement of these demands will determine the shape of how the Greek crisis develops. (pp. 151-152)

Such demands are a challenge to movements against neoliberalism to more centrally develop into movements against capital in general, rather than against just certain manifestations of it. If recent examples of students taking over universities in not only Greece, but in Quebec, Chile, and Mexico as well, offer important tactical insights for physically *taking* buildings as a collective action, they must also be guided by larger visions that go well beyond the important goal of reversing trends in budget cuts and privatization. What Marx (1875/2002) seems to offer this discussion is that the seizing of land and buildings should not be viewed as a way to *only* force pro-labor reforms, but as part of the process of subverting the basis of capital itself—the monopolization of nature, of land, of the means of production. The teaching of history here is fundamentally important. That is, to fully grasp the importance of land, an historical understanding of how capitalism has developed and spread through a process of primitive accumulation is crucial. Also introduced here is the importance of critical geography and the understanding that space is socially produced and therefore subject to the value dialectic. Space, in other words, must always be defined in relation to its useful effect, i.e., whether it is being used to produce use-value or exchange-value (see Ford, 2014). The seizing of land and occupation of buildings by workers and students thus potentially transforms the use to which buildings are being put, and thus their relationship to the capitalist mode of production's augmentation of value. As we write this essay, for example, Derek is participating in a sit-in at Syracuse University, in which students have occupied part of the main administration building for three days now to protest the ongoing neoliberalization of the campus, including cuts to student services and scholarships for working-class and oppressed students. During the day, hundreds of students (graduate and undergraduate), staff, faculty, and community members stop by for varying periods of time to speak, study, and organize. After 10 pm each day, around 40 students stay in the building as it closes to sleep, collectively decide how to respond to the latest response by the administration, and continue organizing the movement. This building, in many ways the center of power of

the corporate university, has been reclaimed and is being put toward other ends, useful not in relation to capital's needs but to the collective needs of the students.

The next point that Marx (1875/2002) takes issue with relevant to the development of critical pedagogy is that, "the proceeds of labor belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society" (p. 4). First and foremost, Marx (1875/2002) argues that this statement "...has at all times been made use of by the champions of the *prevailing state of society*" (p. 4). That is, the capitalist class is the idle class, the class whose wealth and culture comes from the labor of others. Stating that a society's productive output belongs, undiminished, to all member of society, leaves the privileged position of the non-laboring bourgeoisie intact. Not only does the idle class represent a major strain on the *undiminished proceeds of labor*, but so does the inevitable costs of maintaining and improving the instruments and providing insurance against unforeseen mishaps, mistakes, and natural disasters. The notion of *undiminished proceeds of labor*, for Marx, is therefore nothing more than abstract jargon. From here we might note that Marx is challenging us to ensure our critical pedagogy and program for action be free of loose concepts and uncritical rhetoric. For example, when we engage our critical pedagogy to challenge the policies of university administrators and governing boards, our analysis and goal should include the abolition of the non-laboring (i.e., non-teaching), bourgeois governing class, and thus the abolition of ourselves as externally controlled labor (i.e., professors, seventy percent of which in the U.S. are now part-time, contingent proletarianized, adjunct workers). True to his dialectical approach Marx (1875/2002) conceptualized the elimination of this unproductive administrator labor as a gradual process: "this part will, from the outset, be very considerably restricted in comparison with present-day society and it diminishes in proportion as the new society develops" (p. 7).

Marx then challenges the Programme for only challenging the capitalist class and not the landowners represented in their statement that, “the instruments of labor are the monopoly of the capitalist class” (Marx, 1875/2002, p. 5). For Lassalle wanted the party to form an alliance with the landowners at the expense of an alliance with the peasants. The importance of this insight, for Marx, resides in the fact that capitalists frequently do not own the land on which their factories are located. This critique reinforces our previous point since university administrators at public institutions do not own the land on which the knowledge factories they operate are located. It is the state that owns the land, and the purpose of the state in the current era of global capitalism—an era marked not by cyclical crisis, but systemic, and thus permanent and dangerous, crisis—is to mediate and stall capital’s current, structurally-determined descending phase (Mészáros, 2011). Our critical pedagogy must therefore address not only all sectors of the capitalist class—including money capitalists, merchant capitalists, and commodity capitalists—but the landowning class as well, which is indispensable for converting *all of the instruments of labor into society’s common property*. Moreover, this will help us be attentive to the internal contradictions of the capitalist class.

Engel’s (1880/2007) discussion of the role of the state during the period of the historical development of capital not only remains relevant, but contributes to both Marx’s (1875/2002) discussion and the critical pedagogy of becoming developed here. For Engel’s (1880/2007) the state is “the official representative of capitalist society” and as the cyclical crises deepen and become permanent, and thus systemic, it “will ultimately have to undertake the direction of production” (p. 87). We have seen this tendency throughout the capitalist world, most notably as a response to the economic crisis of 2008 where banks and large automobile manufacturers were bailed out and temporarily taken over by various nation states from the U.S. to Great Britain. More concretely defining the role of the state within capitalism Engels (1880/2007) explains:

The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine, the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital. The more it proceeds to the taking over of productive forces, the more does it actually become the national capitalist, the more citizens does it exploit. The workers remain wageworkers—proletarians. The capitalist relation is not done away with. (p. 88)

The aforementioned austerity measures ravaging much of the world makes the most sense in the context of Engels' notion of the state as a "capitalist machine." The No Child Left Behind Act, Race to the Top, and the War on Terror in the United States are obvious products of this machine. Such insights challenge the rallying cries in critical pedagogy for saving public education from the neoliberal era's movement to privatize the welfare state, by challenging the state itself as a mechanism and tool of capital. While public spaces tend to offer more room for creative critical pedagogies, and, it might be argued, are therefore worth saving, today's capitalism cannot return to previous eras. What is more, the extreme right-wing political parties argue that public education is socialism and therefore must be freed from this monopoly so the most competitive products can rise to their market-determined place of superiority allowing inferior competitors (i.e., schools) to perish. In this context, fighting for public education is a progressive position. For Marx (1875/2002) (see below), the state should fund education, but have no control over its purpose or curriculum. As argued above, critical pedagogy needs a purpose and vision that can see beyond the social universe of capital. Peter McLaren (2005) has contributed much to this Marxist purpose of critical pedagogy. McLaren's forthcoming reader, *This Fist Called My Heart*, is indispensable here.

What comes next is a particularly heavy blow as Marx (1875/2002) accuses the Programme of employing, "loose notions...in place of definite economic conceptions" (p. 6). This critique is directed, for example, at the previously mentioned

statement that, “the proceeds of labor” (p. 6) should be distributed equitably, of which Marx (1875/2002) comments,

What are “the proceeds of labor”? The product of labor or its value? And in the latter case, is it the total value of the product or only that of the value which labor has newly added to the value of the means of production consumed? What is “equitable distribution”? Do not the bourgeoisie assert that the present-day distribution is “equitable”?

These questions are relevant for critical pedagogy as they challenge critical educators to fully think through what it means to fight for social justice. Socialism, for Marx, does not stem from a redistribution of wealth, but from subverting the process of accumulating surplus-value. Peter Hudis’ (2012) book, *Marx’s Concept of the Alternative to Capital*, brings together, for the first time, a comprehensive account of Marx’s developing idea of what a post-capitalist future might look like by emphasizing what cannot exist (i.e., M—C—M) for capitalism to have been transcended. As we will see below, the focus on equitable distribution in a Marxist critical pedagogy is misplaced.

In his other works Marx does not in fact call for equitable distribution, but for the abolition of the generalizable, abstract equivalent, operating behind the backs of producers, which is necessary to begin transcending the root cause of alienation (i.e., the permanent and expanding separation of thinking and doing or mental and manual labor) under capitalism (and poverty and immiseration in the process). As Marx writes in the second volume of *Capital*: “If we were to consider a communist society in place of a capitalist one, then money capital would immediately be done away with, and so too *the disguises that transactions acquire through it*” (Marx, 1885/1978, p. 390, emphasis added). This analysis is particularly necessary for envisioning a human existence beyond the law of capital and the producer as commodity.

Marx then argues that the transition to socialism should not only see the proportion of wealth going to unproductive administrative labor decrease, but it should also see a greater portion of the proceeds of labor going to schools, healthcare, and other services designed to meet humanity's collective needs (contrary to the purpose of the capitalist state as argued above). In regards to education and other social services Marx (1875/2002) notes that, "from the outset this part is considerably increased in comparison with present-day society and it increases in proportion as the new society develops" (p. 7). In the current context of the new educational normal, that is, a perpetual, downward spiral of budget cuts and privatization, a greater emphasis on education to facilitate the process of collective becoming is not hard to imagine. Essentially, Marx is making the case that the very concept of the *undiminished proceeds of labor* is simply out of place and misguided in a post-capitalist society. Consider:

Within the co-operative society based on the common ownership of the means of production, the producers do not exchange their products; just as little does the labor employed on the products appear here as the value of these products, as a material quality possessed by them, since now, in contrast to capitalist society, individual labor no longer exists in an indirect fashion but directly as a component part of the total labor. The phrase "proceeds of labor," objectionable even today because of its ambiguity, thus loses all meaning. (p. 8)

Put another way, we might say that the phrase "proceeds of labor" only makes sense (and for Marx not very much sense) in the context of a capitalist society where laborers, as a general rule, do not consume or control the products of their own labor. That is, the concept hints at the separation between labor, commodities, and "proceeds." Marx (1875/2002) is absolutely clear here as he reminds his readers that what he is alluding to is the development of communist society, which does not, and cannot, develop "on its own foundation," as the Gotha Program suggests, "but on the contrary, as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally,

and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges” (p. 8).

Clearly Marx’s concept of a post-capitalist society places human agency at the center mediating the structural determinations of the capitalist mode of production. However, Marx has too often been interpreted as advocating a form of economic determinism. The passage presented earlier on in this essay where Marx (1867/1967) is speaking from the perspective of the laborer, conscious of both her exploitation and capacity to challenge it, speaks to Marx’s keen awareness of how capital operates according to an internal logic that can be either consented to or resisted. While capitalist society develops in a very specific direction, its future, for Marx, is not predetermined. Engels’ (1880/2007) conception of social change has also been interpreted as economically deterministic. Consider the following rather lengthy passage from *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*:

The materialist conception of history starts from the proposition that the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged. From this point of view the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought not in men’s brains, not in man’s better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought not in the philosophy, but in the economics of each particular epoch. (pp. 71-72)

From the perspective of bourgeois ideology this passage could be interpreted as advancing the idea that it is not humans that create change, but the structural determinations of social systems working on their own, free of human intervention, like a clock wound up and moving through predetermined motions. However, situated in the larger context of Engels’ (1880/2007)

argument against bourgeois utopian socialists, he is arguing that the critical human agency of the working-class is *not* informed by the superior intelligence of a few elite philosophers, but by particular understandings and analyses of the *material conditions* which give rise to unmet needs. Because an analysis of the internal workings of capital is neither spontaneous nor does it come automatically from experience, it has been argued that the working-class, steeped in bourgeois ideology, is not likely to develop its own independent class analysis that leads to revolutionary agency. There is, of course, a dialectic between spontaneity, leadership, and organization.

Engels (1880/2007) identifies his understanding of the importance of human agency when he refers to the “growing perception” of the irrationality of capital and the need to transform “the modes of production and exchange themselves” (p. 72). Essentially, Engels (1880/2007) is arguing that human energies directed at contributing to a post-capitalist future should not be limited to abstract reasoning, but should focus on collecting evidence and analyzing concrete, material conditions, what he calls “...the stubborn facts of the existing system of production” (p. 72). As with Marx, Engels (1880/2007) conception of change is dialectical in the Hegelian sense, marked by a dynamic interaction and antagonism between the parts and the whole. Making a larger point concerning the magnitude and mass of surplus-value, Marx (1867/1967) notes how Hegel discovered “that merely quantitative differences beyond a certain point pass into qualitative changes” (p. 309). As an example Marx (1867/1967) points to “the guilds of the middle ages” that “tried to prevent by force the transformation of the master of a trade into a capitalist by limiting the number of laborers that could be employed by one master” (p. 309). Engels (1880/2007) highlights the process by which the bourgeoisie broke free from the feudal barriers to the unlimited accumulation of surplus labor hours. In his discussion he therefore identifies the bourgeoisie as the active, human agent of change ushering in the capitalistic era:

The bourgeoisie broke up the feudal system and built upon its ruins the capitalist order of society, the kingdom of free competition, of personal liberty, of the equality before the law of all commodity owners, of all the rest of the capitalist blessings. (Engels, 1880/2007, p. 72)

As with the transition from feudalism to capitalism, there too will be active revolutionary agents of change with the transition out of capitalism. What is uncertain, however, is the nature of this movement. That is, will it be progressive or reactionary? Due to the long-term negative effects of cultural hegemony on labor, a post-capitalist future could very well be more authoritarian and fascist than the authoritarianism and fascism of today. Countering the current hegemony is therefore a pressing challenge for critical pedagogy. Regardless of the nature of its manifestation, Engels' (1880/2007) (and Marx) identifies this agent as primarily within those who rely on a wage to survive, the working class, which, from this Marxist conception of social class, is nearly all of humanity, from those whose lives are cut short from the extreme exploitation rampant in so-called third-world sweat shops to relatively privileged university professors in the so-called first-world (despite the great diversity of privilege and suffering within labor). Making the point that social change tends to come from social classes that are experiencing un-resolvable structural barriers to becoming and who are aware of their own material conditions, using capitalism as an example, Engels (1880/2007) is instructive:

The new productive forces have already outgrown the capitalist mode of using them. And this conflict between productive forces and modes of production is not a conflict engendered in the mind of man, like that between original sin and divine justice. It exists in fact, objectively, outside us, independently of the will and actions of even the men who brought it on. Modern socialism is nothing but the reflex, in thought, of this conflict in fact; its ideal reflection in the minds, first, of the class directly suffering under it, the working class. (p. 73)

This too is where our critical pedagogy should look for a concrete understanding of the world in which we confront. With this in mind, Marx's (1875/2002) critique and outline of the transition out of the capitalist mode of production remains highly relevant. The first step in this transition, for Marx (1875/2002), is to ensure that workers, after the aforementioned deductions for education and what not are made, gets back exactly what he or she puts in. According to Marx's labor theory of value in the initial stages of developing a post-capitalist society producers would not be cheated out of their surplus labor hours. The worker, therefore, gets back from society a voucher representing the amount of labor hours he puts in. Marx (1875/2002) therefore states that, "the same amount of labor which he has given to society in one form, he receives back in another" (p. 8). While this formula for the exchange of equal values currently regulates the exchange of commodities (in theory at least), in its altered form, "no one can give anything except his labor, and because, on the other hand, nothing can pass into the ownership of individuals except individual means of consumption" (Marx, 1875/2002, p. 9). As Marx (1885/1978) puts it in *Capital*, "There is no reason why the produces should not receive paper tokens permitting them to withdraw an amount corresponding to their labour time from the social consumption stocks. But these tokens are not money; they do not circulate" (p. 434).

However, while Marx (1875/2002) refers to his formulation as an "advance," he qualifies it as still being "stigmatized by a bourgeois limitation" (p. 9) encompassed within the notion of *rights*. Making this point Marx (1875/2002) explains that, "the right of the producers is *proportional* to the labor they supply; the equality consists in the fact that measurement is made with an *equal standard, labor*" (p. 9). The limitation referred to by Marx resides within the fact that there exists natural differences between individuals in terms of their capacity to labor—in terms of duration and intensity. This must be, otherwise labor could not serve an instrument of measure. Consequently, "this *equal* right is an unequal right for unequal labor" (Marx, 1875/2002, p. 9).

This is the limited nature of rights. Using an equal standard for unequal individuals, can only serve to reinforce inequality. Using labor as a standard measure, for example, ignores everything else but labor. It ignores the long-lasting effects of racial, gender, and class discrimination that, if not concretely addressed, will persist. Some workers have children and are responsible for dependents and will therefore receive less of the total social product, for example. While these limitations can be overcome, Marx argues they are unavoidable in the first stages of communist society.

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of individuals under division of labor, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and manual labor, has vanished; after labor, from a mere means of life, has itself become the prime necessity of life; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be fully left behind and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs! (Marx, 1875/2002, p. 10)

This then is the basis for Marx's just society and the ultimate long-term goal of a Marxist pedagogy of becoming. Marx (1875/2002) therefore stresses that the socialist focus on equalizing distribution and consumption is misplaced because these processes are mere "consequences of the distribution of the conditions of production themselves" (p. 10), which, once corrected, can lead to an altered distribution of the means of consumption.

Philosophically, what Marx is concretizing here in his outline of a post-capitalist society is his corrected version of Hegel's dialectic, or the theory of movement and change propelled by contradictions inherent within the *logic* of capital itself (outlined in Malott, 2014). Marx's conception of communism, described above, represents the positive that already exists as a

structurally-determined potentiality within the negative (i.e., bourgeois society). It is the internal contradictions within the negative that compels, but does not predetermine, it to change. The absolute idea is becoming. Hegel conceptualized this movement as the negation of the negation. We might say that one way to understand this double negativity is by the process of eliminating the external and internal barriers to becoming. We can see this in Marx's multiple stages of the development of capitalist society outlined above. Dunayevskaya's theory of state capitalism was informed by this analysis and reading of Marx's (1875/2002) Critique of the Gotha Program. That is, she critiqued the Soviet Union for ending the struggle for communism after just the initial, armed struggle stage in the revolutionary process of becoming. While the political critique wielded may have been missing historical and material elements, the theoretical point that we take from it is that a Marxist pedagogy of becoming begins exactly where we are. For us, it is selling our capacity to teach and produce research in a teacher education program at a unionized, state-owned, traditionally working-class university in West Chester, PA, USA, and in a teacher education program at a private university in Syracuse, NY, USA. This is precisely why we provided examples of the university and education context. Laborers selling their human commodity in other aspects of industry therefore have their concrete conditions of production as their place of departure. Collectively, in all our diversity of skill, ability, and wage, all workers face a common antagonistic capitalist negative counterpart and a capitalist economy that has entered a permanent stage of descent and perpetual crisis that threatens all of humanity and the very system of nature itself. This pedagogy of becoming is therefore not a casual call to action, but comes with a sense of urgency that is not possible to exaggerate or overstate.

Consequently, we might say that this critical pedagogy of becoming is intended to represent a rebellion in education. That is, this critical pedagogy is informed by the same insights informing Marx's (1875/2002) hypothetical wage-workers who

uncover and become conscious of the fact that “wages are not what they *appear* to be, namely, the *value, or price, of labor*, but only a masked form for the *value, or price, of labor power*,” and, as a result, develop a full understanding of capitalism and become socialist organizers. Put another way, we might say that the goal of a Marxist critical pedagogy is to facilitate a class- and self-consciousness within students and teachers similar to the “...slaves who have at last got behind the secret of slavery and broken out in rebellion” (Marx, 1875/2002, p. 15). As suggested above, this critical pedagogy is so out of fashion at the present moment in the larger mainstream critical pedagogy community at the center of the capitalist power base, the United States, that Marxist educators often relate to Marx’s dismay of how many socialists prescribed to the limited analysis showcased within the Gotha Programme.

Contrary to the Gotha Programme, what Marx (1875/2002) is laying out, as alluded to above, is a nuanced analysis of “what transformation will the state undergo in communist society” and what “social functions will remain in existence” that currently exist (p. 18)? In regards to education Marx (1875/2002) critiques the Programme for advocating for universal education because it already existed as such in the U.S., Germany, Switzerland, and elsewhere during his time. Rather, Marx (1875/2002) argues that the Gotha Programme should have advocated for technical education that is both theoretical and practical. For Marx (1875/2002), this approach to education is designed to reunite mental and manual labor to overcome the estrangement of capitalist production. That is, the extreme division of labor in capitalism reduced some to thinking (i.e., engineering, management, etc.) and others to doing (manual labor, deprofessionalized teaching, etc.). In another statement Marx (1875/2002) advocates for, “an early combination of productive labor with education,” claiming such an agenda, “is one of the most potent means for the transformation or present-day society” (p. 22). This is no simple vocational education, which is nothing more than a means of perpetuating the division of mental and

manual labor. Marx, rather, is laying out how society might function with the abolition of the idle class, the bourgeoisie. What if everyone was expected to work and think as the foundation of a society based upon the ethic of *each according to his or her ability, and each according to her or his need*? In short, Marx was against any external force or authority that operates behind the backs of producers. Consequently, Marx (1875/2002) disagreed with the state in capitalism having any influence on education plainly stating that “government and church should rather be equally excluded from any influence on the school” (p. 21). It is rather *the state* that needs to be educated by *the people* (i.e., the proletarians).

Communism and a Marxist Critical Pedagogy of Becoming

The purpose of this final section is to spell out more concretely what a Marxist critical pedagogy of becoming might look like by synthesizing, extending, and explicitly formulating the points made above. First, however, we want to briefly survey the strands of critical pedagogy that we are simultaneously building on and, in some ways, departing from.

As a body of literature and praxis, critical pedagogy has historically been oriented toward intervening in and transforming exploitative and oppressive social relations. Early iterations of critical pedagogy, such as the one articulated in Henry Giroux’s (1983) classic *Theory & Resistance in Education*, were thus focused heavily on *revealing* systems of oppression and exploitation, of demonstrating the systemic and interconnected mechanisms operating behind the backs of the oppressed. One of Freire’s great contributions (and one that, unfortunately, has overshadowed his many others), is the dialogical and creative means by which this takes place. Thus, this first phase of critical pedagogy relies heavily upon the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, as represented by thinkers such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and, to a lesser extent, Walter Benjamin. Responding to what they saw as the economic

determinism of the Third International and official socialism, the Frankfurt School project represented an attempt to subject the superstructure of capitalist society to a rigorous critique. As Giroux (1983) notes, "while orthodox Marxist theory established a relationship between culture and the material forces of society, it did so by reducing culture to a mere reflex of the economic realm" (p. 22). Attempting to combat the trend of economic determinism, the Frankfurt School emphasized the superstructural elements of society and the role that elements such as culture, knowledge, and language, and desire play in the maintenance and reproduction of oppression, inequality, and injustice (i.e., capitalist social relations). Many of these elements, such as knowledge and language, are of course intimately connected with schooling and education, which leads Peter McLaren (1989), for example, when outlining the major concepts utilized in critical pedagogy, to write about such concepts as ideology, hegemony, cultural capital, and discourse.

The late 1980s and 1990s saw a radical proliferation of critical pedagogies, many of which were influenced by the then-burgeoning fields of post-structuralism and feminism. This was an intense period of debate about and within the field of critical pedagogy concerning issues of power and teacher authority, rationality and irrationality, dialogue and voice, and the relationship between knowledge and the "truth." There were important insights generated and contradictions revealed in these debates, although many of the critics, such as Patti Lather and Elizabeth Ellsworth, did not engage in a sustained conversation and critique. Thus, at the end of the 20th century, there was a definite dip in the generation of critical pedagogical thought. This was also accompanied by a mainstreaming of critical pedagogy, a packaging of critical pedagogy and its reduction to "dialogue" and "student-teacher/teacher-student" practice.

Recently, however, we have witnessed a resurgence of critical pedagogy, and a shift away from the debates of the 1990s and

toward a sustained critique of educational privatizations and, more generally, neoliberalism. A new wave of scholars such as Brad Porfilio, Wayne Ross, Dennis Carlson, Suzy SooHoo, and Ana Cruz have provided integral analyses of the contemporary phase of capitalism, its impact on schools, students, teachers, and educational processes, and ways that these impacts are being channeled. These insights have been bolstered by the work of Henry Giroux and others. Additionally, we are currently witnessing a resurgence of Marxist theorizing in critical education and critical pedagogy. This recent turn, led in many ways by Peter McLaren, Glenn Rikowski, Mike Cole, Dave Hill, Antonia Darder, and the late Paula Allman, has centered the capital-labor relation and the class dialectic as a central concern. We believe that the critiques of neoliberalism and privatization must be seen in context with this latter work, enabling the former trends to be located within an overarching framework of capitalist exploitation and oppression. The following six points of a Marxist critical pedagogy of becoming that we delineate here are predicated upon—and meant to reinforce—such an insistence.

First, the critical pedagogy we have constructed here begins with recognizing the deep-seated, religious-like anti-communism that is propagated at nearly every turn in U.S. society. From schools to news outlets, from popular to alternative media, and from the extreme political right wing and the left wing, we are constantly told that communism equals totalitarianism and a life without color. As Jodi Dean (2012) has put it, we are currently limited by a teleological, historicist narrative of “The chain communism-Soviet Union-Stalinism-collapse” (p. 32). Our critical pedagogy begins with an outright rejection of not only this chain, however, but also, and more importantly, a rejection of the narrative upon which it rests. It begins, that is, with a dialectical and historical-materialist account of actually-existing socialism of yesterday and today, with an understanding of the historical events and forces that shape(d) policies and practices. Such an objective appraisal avoids both uncritically glorifying and condemning socialist and worker’s states—as well as their governing bodies. The

communist struggle today does not seek, of course, to replicate the communism of yesterday, but seeks to create a new democratic socialism for the 21st century.

Second, our critical pedagogy is oriented toward the totality of life. What we mean by this is that it is not merely focused on developing critical consciousness and reclaiming time for creativity in education as ends in themselves, but insofar as they contribute to the overall struggle of liberating nature and the social productive forces from private ownership. This, of course, entails—and is a necessary prerequisite for—the liberation of the individual subject. In stark contrast to mainstream, domesticated currents that put critical pedagogy forward as a method of teaching and learning, we insist that critical pedagogy is part of a movement toward the radical transformation of the totality of social relations, which entails the *abolition* of capitalism and private-property based social relations. This means—and this point is absolutely crucial—that our critical pedagogy is only interested in combating neoliberalism only because neoliberalism is the current configuration of capitalism and the capital relation today. We are not interested in fighting neoliberal privatizations in the name of a kinder, gentler capitalism (which is always only kinder and gentler for some, of course). Or, more strategically speaking, we are interested in fighting neoliberalism insofar as that fight allows us to lay bare the fundamental logic of capital upon which it rests.

Third, a critical pedagogy of becoming connects to and builds upon global struggles—successful and defeated—against exploitation and oppression. As such, we look to the struggles of teachers, students, and workers in Greece and Mexico, and in Quebec and Turkey, in solidarity. We seek to articulate their struggles in our own cities, workplaces, and schools. We identify as allies with the oppressed who are waging their struggle for liberation *through* and *with* the apparatus of the state, such as it is occurring in, for example, Cuba and Venezuela. We also

connect our struggle at home with those peoples and nations under attack—or threat of attack—by U.S. imperialism. Ever since the dissolution and overthrow of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc socialist countries the globe has been victim of an aggressive campaign to overthrow any government that has remained independent of, or antagonistic to, global capital and its imperialist hawks in NATO and the U.S. Pentagon. This was the logic behind the overt wars on Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya, U.S. intervention in Ukraine, the partitioning of the Sudan, and the ongoing war on Syria; it is the logic behind the covert wars (by economic sanctions, drones, and other means) on Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Venezuela, Cuba, Eritrea, and China.

When evaluating and, ultimately, judging struggles as they erupt across the globe, then, we must always inquire into the *class character* of these struggles and what effect these struggles will have in relation to the global totality that is dominated by imperialism. Further, we must ask ourselves what effect *our support* of those movements will likely have. The results of such analysis will not always make us popular, particularly given the velocity and impact of U.S. propaganda. Take, for example, the recent U.S. war on Libya in 2011. This war was portrayed by alternative and mainstream media as a popular, democratic uprising against a ruthless tyrant, and this narrative was embraced by many on the left. Yet in Libya there was no mass movement, no working-class or peasant character evident; it was immediately an armed right-wing insurrection that began with the splintering of the government (see Forte, 2012). Actually, to be more precise, there was a mass movement, but it was in support of the government, or, rather, in defense of the nation from imperialism and its rebel allies. To oppose the rebels and support Libyan self-defense at this particular moment meant isolation from not only the liberals but also much of the left.

Fourth, the critical pedagogy intimated here must be based on critical, rigorous concepts and formulations. As Marx chastised Lassalle for his uncritical formulations such as the “proceeds of labor” or the “prevailing state of society,” we must ensure that the frameworks within which we act are formulated at an appropriate level of abstraction (see Ollman, 1993). An example of an uncritical, inaccurately-abstracted concept in many brands of critical pedagogy that we must subject to critique is that of “student.” Critical pedagogues, so it goes, must be student-centered, we must work to transform the lives of our students, and so on. The critical question we ask here is: which students? For “students” is in many ways a mystifying category, one that can serve to blur and even render invisible class lines. After all, the children of the bourgeoisie can sit in desks adjacent to the children of the working class, particularly in institutions of higher education. Thus, a critical pedagogy of becoming, based on a class analysis, is oriented toward *working-class and other oppressed students*, not students in general. Or, perhaps we could say that critical pedagogy should work to transform the lives of all students, just in different ways: it should work to liberate oppressed students and repress students from the oppressing class (so that, in accordance with Freire, they can be humanized).

The fifth point is tied to and follows from the fourth: A critical pedagogy of becoming isn’t just about transformation; it is about transformation towards communism. This is a radical and necessary departure from contemporary critical pedagogy (and left educational theory more generally) that is cloaked in talk of “democracy” and, more radically, “anti-capitalism.” The former signifier is particularly dangerous and reactionary today. As Dean (2012), states, “for leftists to refer to their goals as a struggle for democracy is strange. It is a defense of the status quo, a call for more of the same” (p. 57). Further, it “avoids the fundamental antagonism between the 1 percent and the rest of us by acting as if the only thing really missing was participation” (pp. 57-58). In other words, the extent to which critical pedagogy embraces calls

for democracy is the extent to which it ignores and sublimates class struggle. Marx criticized the Lassallian call for a “free people’s state” in The Gotha Programme on similar grounds. Marx insisted that the state was always occupied and wielded by a specific class for their self-interest. Calls for democracy obscure this reality and cover over the social relations of production under capitalism. As Lukàcs writes, this move has the effect “*of disorganizing these classes as classes* and pulverizing them into atoms easily manipulated by the bourgeoisie” (p. 64), transforming “proletarians” into “citizens.” While critical and other pedagogies based on anti-capitalism represent an improvement on those emanating from vague conceptions of democracy, they nonetheless hesitate, remaining stuck in the moment of critique. They are fixated, in other words, on the process of “becoming,” and are not concerned with what this becoming will become. While we do not claim to articulate the future in advance, we do insist, as Marx did in his critique, that we imagine this future and locate its potentialities within the subjective and objective tendencies present within capitalism today.

This leads us to our sixth, and final point. This point is derived not so much from the *content* of Marx’s critique, but from its purpose and overall context: namely, the necessity for organization and the Party. The purpose of Marx’s intervention, after all, was not based on a desire for some theoretical consistency or purity; on the contrary, it was motivated by a (well-founded) concern of what effects the theoretical formulations and concepts in the Programme would have on the workers’ and socialist movements in Germany. Interestingly, Marx never wrote a book or pamphlet about the party-form, yet the necessity of the party was what underwrote his life’s work. It is, after all, not merely the working-class as such, but the organized working-class that represents the ultimate threat to the rule of capital. The Party, in other words, is that which mediates *becoming*, defending it from capitalism and advancing it toward communism.

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