

# **Marxist Critical Policy Analysis (MCPA), Traditional Policy Analysis (TPA) and Critical Policy Analysis (CPA): What MCPA is, What it does, Why, and in Whose interests**

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## **Abstract**

This paper advances Marxist Critical Policy Analysis (MCPA) - a particular form of Critical Policy Analysis. I contrast it with 'Traditional Policy Analysis' (TPA) and with 'Critical Policy Analysis' (CPA), generally, and, with respect to Education, work by Michael W. Apple, Stephen J. Ball, and wider reformist, postmodern and intersectional/identitarian analysis.

Marxist Critical Policy Analysis is applicable to different areas of policy - for example, economic, fiscal, labour, foreign, immigration, defence, housing, transport, environmental, civil liberties, and human rights policies. MCPA can be applied at any level (local, regional, national or global).

MCPA, what, in relation to education, I earlier termed 'Critical Education Policy Analysis' (Hill 2009a) centres on the question of 'Who Wins, Who Loses?' but, more precisely, which 'raced' and gendered social class, or class strata, or fractions or layers, win or lose? And what do they win or lose, when, where, and how.

I critique, in particular, Critical (Education) Policy Analyses (CPA) and associated theoretical/ideological developments that deny the salience of

class, occlude class consciousness, are reformist capitalist rather than revolutionary anti-capitalist Marxist and dismiss or disable revolutionary activism. I conclude by setting out what is specifically Marxist about Marxist Critical Policy Analysis (MCPA).

## **Introduction**

The article adds to an earlier piece that addressed the question of ‘Critical Education Policy Analysis’ (CEPA) (Hill, 2009a) by clarifying which ‘raced’ and gendered social class, or class strata fractions or layers, gain from schools and their curricula, and obtain advantages from educational systems and policy mediations. This original piece attended to issues of curriculum and assessment, pedagogy, the organisational culture within schools as institutions, and the political organisation of the education system. It was critical firstly of Traditional Policy Analysis (TPA) and secondly of developments since the 1960s in educational research and publishing, Critical Policy Analysis, CPA. CPA denies the *salience* of class analysis and struggle and occludes class-consciousness. This new (2023) paper adds to the old by setting out how MCPA offers a more rigorous critique than CPA- as a specifically Marxist analysis that operates in relation to distinct class interests and the development of critical class-consciousness.

## **Part One - Traditional Policy Analysis (TPA)**

Prior to CPA there was Traditional Policy Analysis (TPA), which is located within liberal-pluralist- rationalist ideology/ analysis- of policy, power and the state that considers that policy developers rationally discuss pros and cons of a policy, by carefully balancing alternative viewpoints from different stakeholders and coming to a consensus. Diem, Young and Sampson (2018) note that ‘[I]n these approaches, policy making is generally considered a deliberate, linear process where an identifiable set of actors apply reason and research strategies

to ensure the best policy outcomes.’ They continue, ‘TPA takes for granted that researchers are capable of obtaining, accumulating, and understanding the knowledge necessary for identifying and deciding between policy solutions as well as planning for implementation and evaluation.’ They suggest that with TPA ‘researchers can evaluate policies, policy alternatives, and practices and express their evaluations to stakeholders in manners that can be used to identify and ameliorate problems’. Ham and Hill’s comment on such pluralist policy analysis is that, ‘no group is without power to influence decision making, and equally, no group is dominant’ (2005: 28). Ham and Hill continue, ‘in a pluralist political system power is fragmented and diffused, and the basic picture presented by the pluralists is of a political marketplace where what a group achieves depends on its resources and its ‘decibel rating’’ (Ham and Hill, 2005: 30).

TPA lacks a holistic approach to determinants of policymaking and is unable to unravel and analyse what happens in schools and non-formal education settings in terms of accumulation and legitimation processes in the overall capitalist society (Torres, 1989: 86). It focusses on, ‘narrow empiricist studies of administrative processes’ (Torres, 1989: 82).

TPA is also located in the conservative social theory of structural functionalism, associated with Durkheimian sociology, for example in Talcott Parsons’ *The Social System* ([1951] 1991) and in the field of policy making, Almond and Verba’s (1963) *The Civic Culture*. They (Almond and Verba) asserted that the ‘civic culture’ is ‘based on communication and persuasion, a culture of consensus and diversity, a culture that [permits] change but [moderates] it’ (Almond and Verba, 1963: 8). Privileging USA and UK, Almond and Verba describe strong civic cultures as having ‘robust support for achieving political *homeostatis*’ (system stability).

Both Liberal Pluralism and Structural-Functionalism are, essentially, consensus-based analyses rather than conflict-based analyses.

In the light of the recent half-century of neoliberal onslaught and, more recently, conservative authoritarian onslaught on socialist, egalitarian and even liberal-progressive policies which has permeated and dominated policy discourse and policy implementation (with malign material effects) this suggestion of 'policy balancing the competing interests of all stakeholders' now seems rather naïve. Such liberal pluralism can be criticised as 'a neutral liberalism that abstains from difficult questions about the highest good' (Mookherjee, 2019). It is, essentially, a depoliticised, a de-ideologised, analysis.

For example, a classical critique of TPA by Critical Policy Analysts and by Marxist Critical Policy Analysts, is that TPA, with its claims that policy development is rational, balancing competing interests, can be typified by what Voltaire's *Candide* might say, 'All is for the Best in the Best Possible of Worlds' in the policy process.

## **Part Two: Critical Policy Analysis (CPA)**

CPA is an advance in some respects on TPA as it *problematizes* the rational approach of traditional educational policy development and research and expands the analysis to include the role of power and ideology in the policy process and problematises that which had hitherto been taken for granted in education (e.g., Young 1971).

Michael W. Apple and Stephen J. Ball - both - in different ways- are very influential in education policy analysis. They introduced conflict (in particular, with respect to 'race', gender and social class) at both macro- and micro-levels into (education) policy analysis. In key texts such as *Education and Power*

([1982] 2012), *Ideology and curriculum* ([1979] 2019) and *Official Knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age* ([1993] 2014) Apple examined how race, gender and class dynamics are embedded in and reflected through, curricular and other policy issues.

On ‘the politics of critical policy analysis’, Michael W. Apple (2018) notes, ‘[C]ritical policy analysis is grounded in the belief that it is absolutely crucial to understand the complex connections between education and the relations of dominance and subordination in the larger society - and the movements that are trying to interrupt these relations.’ Thus, CPA is a conflict-based analysis, identifying competing claims, ideologies and struggles regarding what Nancy Fraser (1997) calls ‘the politics of redistribution, recognition, and representation’. CPA asks what are the overt and hidden effects of educational reforms are on real people and real communities and tries to challenge existing educational and social inequalities by contributing to policies, community relations, curricula, and teaching that are more socially just. It is an analysis that asks whether schools can change society, and that identifies the importance of resistance and activism by ‘using the privilege one has as a scholar/activist’ (Apple, 2013: 209). Concerning, for example, the curriculum, Apple ([1979] 2019) suggests,

we should ask a ..... set of questions: Whose knowledge is this? How did it become “official”? What is the relationship between this knowledge and how it is organized and taught and who has cultural, social, and economic capital in this society? Who benefits from these definitions of legitimate knowledge and who does not? What are the overt and hidden effects of educational reforms on real people and real communities? What can we do as critical educators to challenge existing educational and social inequalities and to create policies, community relations, curricula, and teaching that are more socially just? (See, for example, Apple 1993/2014, 1979/2019).

Stephen J. Ball and his co-writers follow a similar line by trying to lay bare the micro-detail of how the education system and classroom interactions operate and discriminate against working class children (e.g., 2005). This attention to detail is present in almost all of Ball's writing to some extent. From his breakthrough ethnography *Beachside* (Ball, 1981/2009) onwards, Ball has focused on local level disagreements and (potential for) resistance with/in *the micro-politics* of schooling and education policy through resistant human agency and autonomy in relation to/through daily practices of policy translation and enactment in the everyday life of schools. Ball draws attention to the 'idea that policies are 'contested', mediated and differentially represented by different actors in different contexts' (Ball, 2015: 6) and 'in the social relationships and the haphazard and contingent nature of practices' (Ball, 2013: 6) in the lived connections of actors, both individuals and institutions, that form communities of discourse, people, and organizations.' In Ball's words, the point of CRA is to 'attend to how actually existing neoliberalism gets done' (Ball, 2012: 93).

### **Part Three: Revolutionary Marxist Policy Analysis and a Classical Marxist Critique of Capitalism and Neo-Liberal-Authoritarian Conservative Capitalism**

#### *Personal Activism*

In my own analysis (as from my very first publication, *Charge of the Right Brigade*, in 1989), I make extensive use of use Louis Althusser's work on Ideological and Repressive State Apparatuses (e.g., 1971) to analyse schooling as an Ideological State Apparatus (which, like all ISAs, have Repressive moments). I also use David Blacker's work such as his recent very readable online book *Althusser* (2023). Since I was a teenager sixty years ago, I have been influenced by classic texts from Marx and Engels such as *The Communist Manifesto* ([1848a] 2010a), Marx's *The German Ideology* ([1846] 1932). And in more recent decades influenced by Marxist texts such as Bukharin and

Preobrazhensky's *The ABC of Communism* ([1922] 1969) together with historic Marxist analyses of Fascism/ Neofascism, Neoliberalism and Conservative Authoritarianism (e.g., Trotsky [1938] 2002) and contemporary Marxist analyses, evident in, for example, Hill, 2022a). I have benefitted too, considerably from working and co-writing with Mike Cole, Kevin Harris, Deborah Kelsh, Ravi Kumar, Alpesh Maisuria, Glenn Rikowski, and Peter McLaren, and working politically, over decades in various United Fronts and in various revolutionary Marxist groups in England, Turkey and Greece, and, in particular, with Kostas Skordoulis in Greece. My own Marxist Critical Policy Analysis is, for example, at Hill, 1989, 1997, 2021, 2022a, b; Hill et al, 2016 (see also, to take one other example of MCPA, Beach, 2021 for a materialist class - based analysis of education policy in Sweden).

Recognising that Marxist Analysis must be accompanied by/ result in Activism/Action (Marx, [1845] 2002; Molyneux, 2012), I, together with many other Marxists, and education trade unionists, advance and propagandise Proposals for Action in Education (as does Apple, but his proposals are reformist). My own proposals are at, for example, Hill, 2010, 2021, 2022a) and, in most detailed form (regarding teacher education) in Edwards, Hill and Boxley, 2018). Related activism includes chairing and co-founding the Hillcole Group of Radical left Educators (1989-2002), founding and editing the *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, ([www.jceps.com](http://www.jceps.com)) and initiating and, together with Kostas Skordoulis, co-organising the annual International Conference on Critical Education (ICCE). Since teenage years related activism has included political work – both electoral and in direct action organisation and participation, and in trade union activism and representation. I am currently active in revolutionary Marxist anti-capitalist organisations in England (Socialist Labour Network- SLN, the Campaign for a Mass Workers' Party, CMWP,) and in Greece (OKDE-Spartakos, a constituent party within Antarsya).

*The One Overarching Question and the Four Aspects- the Four Basic Questions*

In my own teaching and writing on education policy analysis I ask the One Overarching Question: Who Wins, Who Loses? Which ‘raced’ and gendered’ social classes or social class strata/ layers/ levels Win or Lose?

*Four Basic Question of a Policy:*

1. What is the Policy?
2. What did/do they Win or Lose as a result of the Policy? What impacts will/ does/ did the policy have?
3. How was it, is it, and can it be Resisted/Colonized/ Neutered/ Ignored on the one hand, or Advanced/ Developed/ Protected on the other?
4. What form(s) of Analysis does this validate or deny?

*Sixteen Critical Questions*

These four basic questions can be subdivided into *15 critical questions* concerning the aims, development, stated ideology, hidden ideology implementation of the policy:

1.What is the Policy?

1. What is it (the policy or set of policies)?

2. What did/do/ will they Win or Lose Policy Impacts?

2. Who/ what does it impact on/ alter/regulate/ deregulate/ allow/ prohibit?
3. What are the policy features/ changes?
4. Who carries/carried / will carry out/ implement/ enforce the policy?
5. When? And when does/ did it become operational?
6. Who proposed/ originated the policy?
7. What *stated* intentions/ intended impacts/ reasons/ rationale did they give?
8. What are the *unstated* intentions of the Policy?
9. How does the policy relate to broader ideological and policy developments? (What is the broader ideological and policy context)?



10. What consequences/ impacts did/ does/ will it have: what groups win/ lose. 'won'/ gained, and what groups (social class groups, castes, ethnic groups, sexes, sexualities, other groups)? lost
11. What did they win or lose? (e.g., in terms of access, materially, in term so individual/ group security, e.g., job security; respect, health, longevity)
3. How was it, is it, and can it be Resisted/Colonized/ Neutered/ Ignored on the one hand, or Advanced/ Developed/ Protected? on the other?
  12. Who opposed/ resisted it?
  13. Why? What reasons/ rationale/ critique of intentions and possible or intended impacts did they give?
  14. How did they oppose it? With what strategies?
  15. What were the results of the opposition/ resistance (at the planning, legislative and implementation phases)? How successful/ unsuccessful were/ are the strategies of resistance?
4. What Form(s) of Analysis does this validate or deny?
  16. What theoretical analyses/ ideologies would seem to be validated by this policy and its impacts? For example, Marxist, (Structuralist or Cultural), Postmodernist, Identitarian, Feminist, Critical Race Theory, Foucauldian, Bourdieuan, Neoliberal, Fascist, Religion?)

#### **Part Four - Marxist Critical Policy Analysis and Curriculum Analysis.**

I have elsewhere (Hill, 2009a: 296) suggested Curriculum Analysis- analysing curriculum policy (with reference to England and Wales (in particular, the Conservative National Curriculum that resulted from the Education Reform Act of 1988 but applicable more generally) - by asking a number of questions. I pointed out (2009a: 294-5) that.

The National Curriculum is clearly a political creation. Any curriculum is, though some curricula are clearly more openly partisan than are others. Curricula do not arrive on

spaceships from outer space uncontaminated, unmediated, by the ideologies and beliefs and value systems and political agendas of the curriculum makers. Those who decide what 'knowledge' and 'skills' are to be compulsory in schools - and for whom - have their own political and ideological agendas. The National Curriculum of 1988 created by the Conservative Government attempted to create a Conservative hegemony in ideas and remove liberal progressive and socialist ideas from schools and from the minds of future citizens (See also Hill, 1989, 1997).

The questions that should be asked of any *curriculum* are:

1. Whose curriculum is it?
2. Who actually selected the content (e.g.) of the National Curriculum for England and Wales? (And who chose them to do the selecting, and why were they chosen)?
3. Whose culture(s) is/are validated and empowered? and how?

Is the National Curriculum culturally elitist with emphasis on history, music, literature of the ruling upper and upper middle classes (and with a dismissal, demeaning or downgrading of working class and minority ethnic cultures)? Or, conversely, and to what extent, is it an appropriately eclectic curriculum? (Or even, is a proletarian curriculum, praising and validating working-class achievements and histories and culture?)

4. Who wins and who loses- which students, which education workers?

5. What do they win or lose? (e.g., feeling comfortable and valued in school, test and exam results, officially/school recognised status, status within the wider community and labour market, subsequent or contemporaneous income, wealth, power, employment)

6. What ideology or ideologies does the curriculum represent (e.g., an individualistic competitive ideology, or a collective, collegial, ideology for social responsibility)? what ideological values and attitudes are affirmed? For example, does it represent and affirm the ideology, the values and

attitudes, or material interests, of a particular social class or particular ('raced' and gendered class strata)?

**Part Five: What is Specifically Marxist about this Analysis and a Marxist Critique of the Critical Policy Analysis in Education, for example of Michael W. Apple and of Stephen J. Ball.**

The acclaimed state theorist, Bob Jessop, summarises and assesses historic and contemporary critiques of Marxism as an analysis of power:

its neglect of forms of social domination that are not directly related to class; a tendency to over-emphasize the coherence of class domination; the continuing problem of economic reductionism; and the opposite danger of a voluntaristic account of resistance to capitalism. (Jessop, 2012).

As a Revolutionary Marxist in political terms, and as a Classical Marxist in theoretical terms, I see very clear differences with Traditional Policy Analysis (TPA) and with its more critical, problematised and activist successor, Critical Policy Analysis (CPA), which embrace the above critiques of fundamental aspects of Marxism identified by Jessop (2012) above. Below, I set out a brief critique of their (Apple's and Ball's separate and distinct) policy analyses.

The first, Apple, I criticise as being 'Marxian' (as opposed to 'Marxist'), Left Social Democrat, reformist and anti-Revolutionary Marxist. For example, he is an 'intersectionalist', equating as 'parallel', oppression and exploitations based on 'race', class, gender, thereby minimising the Capital - Labour Relation. And, as opposed to seeking to replace Capitalism with Socialism, he stops short at advancing reforms (see, Kelsh and Hill, 2006; Hill, 2022 a, b).

The second (Ball) I critique for being 'Quasi-Post-Modernist', *overly* Foucauldian, overemphasising the micro- (micro-aggression, micro-power,

micro- resistance) (Hill, 2001) and, in political terms, as with Michael W. Apple, of being ‘Left Reformist/ Left social democrat.

Ball focuses on the opportunity and capacity to resist, and, connectedly, on the iniquity of current schooling in terms of social class inequality. Unlike Apple, he does this from a Foucauldian perspective. As Apple himself notes (2013: 210), Stephen Ball is more Foucauldian (2013: 214), and less structuralist than he (Apple) himself (2013: 210).

Both are committed to social justice reforms. Within Capitalism. Both are opposed to Revolutionary Marxism. Both, while advancing reforms, inhibit the class struggle, the replacement of capitalism by socialism and, ultimately, Communism. (After the proletarian revolution, for Marx there is a stage termed ‘socialism’ where the state continues to exist, but in the service of the proletariat, against the bourgeoisie. In this first, or lower, phase of communism, the state is still necessary. but is now a transitional state (Lenin [1919a] 1999a), in the phase between capitalism and communism).

Marxists differ from / go beyond Critical Policy Analysis in the following three ways:

1. Emphasis on class analysis- the *centrality of class*- the Capital-Labour Relation, and on the Class Nature of the State.
2. Emphasis on the *degree/ type of change promoted*, within or against Capital - revolutionary/ fundamental/ anti-capitalist change rather than reformist.
3. Emphasis on *revolutionary activism*- on the political organisation of the class.

What defines Marxists is:

## **1. Emphasis on Class Analysis- the Capital-Labour Relation**

### *Class Conflict*

This first difference between Marxist and non-Marxist socialists is basic to Marx and Engels, from the *Communist Manifesto* (Marx and Engels, ([1848a] 2010a) onwards, the recognition that there is permanent class conflict, ongoing class war between ‘the bourgeoisie and ‘the proletariat’. The relationship between Capital and Labour is not just based on discrimination and oppression, but - unlike discrimination and oppression based on ‘race’, religion, gender, sexuality, age, language - the relationship between Capital and the working class is also, importantly, that of *economic exploitation*. Economic exploitation is the exploitation of the labour power of workers, the appropriation of the surplus value created by the labour power of workers - workers from the various strata/levels/ layers of the working class who sell their labour to capitalists, or to institutions of and upholding and defending the capitalist state and the reproduction and supply of the labour power of workers).

### *Intersectionality, ‘Race’ and Class*

As Jessop (2012) notes, ‘Marxists are usually well aware of other types of subject, identity, antagonism, and domination. But they consider these phenomena largely in terms of their relevance for, and their overdetermination by, class domination’. Jessop (2012) explains that the Marxist focus on class domination ‘does not imply that power and resistance are the preserve of social actors with clear class identities and class interests.’ He continues, ‘it means only that Marxists are mainly interested in the causal interconnections between the exercise of social power and the reproduction and/or transformation of class domination’.

Of course, there is discrimination and oppression- murder, rape, humiliation, daily micro-aggressions, slights and hostility- based on presenting characteristics such as `race`/ ethnicity, sex, sexuality, caste, religion, among others. (And these are very useful for Capitalists in their ongoing attempts to prevent working class unity. Marx himself noted the `divide and rule` strategy of the ruling capitalist class writing that `division of labour seizes upon, not only the economic, but every other sphere of society and everywhere lays the foundation of that all engrossing system of specializing and sorting men (sic)` (Marx, [1867a] (1999a)).

Various theorists and social and political activists deny the centrality (in capitalist society) of class exploitation. They write and speak and propagandise from, and advance, intersectional perspectives, or from perspectives that see `race` or gender as *the fundamental* cleavage in society, as the fundamental forms of oppression.

David Gillborn (e.g., Gillborn, 2005) for example, propagates `race` as being more important to focus on academically, programmatically, politically, than issues of social class and the Capital - Labour Relation. In his (British) version of Critical Race Theory he argues that the salient rationale and intent of legislation in the UK has been concerned with `race` rather than class. This has been roundly critiqued from a Marxist perspective by Cole (e.g. 2020), and Cole's co-writers and thinkers such as Dave Hill (2009b), Alpesh Maisuria (2011) who consider that a theory which sees `race` as the primary form of oppression in society (and in education), like the `equivalence theory` of Michael W. Apple, politically takes the heat off the capitalist class, opens the way for calls for reforming the present political educational social systems- rather than their replacement.

Such theories (as Gillborn's, or Apple's) are functional for Capital in a number of ways: they occlude class consciousness and impede the development of the working-class movement by dividing the working class. And, empirically, they lend themselves and have led to the creation of bourgeois groups among immigrant descended/ black/caste groups and women which benefit very well in academia, in the media, in political leaderships, and in bureaucracies and NGOs (non-governmental organisations), and who have a self-interest in perpetuating the capitalist system of exploitation.

Apple, defends himself on this issue (and others) by accusing revolutionary Marxists such as Hill, Rikowski, McLaren, Allman, Cole, of being 'Marxist fundamentalists', of being 'Bowles and Gintis look-alikes', of being mechanistic and deterministic, seeking to purify 'the' Marxist tradition of the taint of culturalism and of the sin of worrying too much about, say, gender and race at the expense of class.' (Apple, 2006: 680).

Léger (2023), in his hugely useful book and analysis in *'Identity Trumps Socialism- The Class and Identity Debate after Neoliberalism'* notes that 'much of today's study of culture happily deals with race, sexuality and gender but not with the revolutionary overthrow of capitalist society. Léger quotes from an earlier critique of postmodernism by Terry Eagleton (2016: 188) 'Neoliberal capitalism ... has no difficulty with terms like 'diversity' or inclusiveness' as it does with the language of class struggle: In today's universities, museums and corporations, racists are cancelled but not class exploiters.' (Léger, 2023: 12; also Léger, 2021). Léger (2023: 12) asserts with great clarity, 'identity and class are not equivalent.' Class is transformed from an economic and, indeed, social category to an exclusively cultural or discursive one or one in which class merely signifies a 'subject position'. Kelsh and Hill, 2006).

To conclude this brief critique of Apples' and other theoreticians' (and politicians') postmodernist and identitarian ideology and prescriptions (and pro-prescriptions), Rikowski (2006) explains,

social class is at the core of the social relations of production in capitalist society in a way that race and gender are not. Of course, as Apple operates with a neo-Weberian concept of class (as Kelsh and Hill, 2006, and Hill, 2007 indicate) his theoretical and ontological predilections obscure this point. Basically: class equality in capitalist society is impossible, and the eradication of class means the abolition of capitalist society, as *the labour-capital relation is the class relation*. Technically and logically, there could be gender and race equality but capitalism could still exist.

## **2. Emphasis on Anti-Capitalist Socialist Revolution – Marxist Theory of Revolution, contrasted with Revisionist Marxism Satisfied with Reforms Within Capitalism**

The second difference between Marxist and non-Marxist socialists is the belief that *reforms are not sustainable under capitalism*, they are valuable of course-while they last. Of course, Marxists fight for reforms. Marx and Engels ([1848b] 2010b) emphasise, in *The Communist Manifesto, Chapter 4: Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Existing Opposition Parties*, 'The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement'. But they continue, 'they never cease, for a single instant, to instil into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat'.

For Rosa Luxemburg ([1900a] 1999a) reform and revolution had never been opposites: they complemented each other. She opens her major pamphlet, *Reform or Revolution*, with the paragraph,



Can we counterpose social revolution, the transformation of the existing order, our final goal, to social reforms? Certainly not. The daily struggle for reforms, for the amelioration of the condition of the workers within the framework of the existing social order, and for democratic institutions, is for social democracy indissolubly tied to its final goal. The struggle for reforms is its means; the social revolution, its goal.

Marxists recognise that reforms are stripped away when there are the (recurrent and systemic) crises of capital, such as the 1930s, 1970s, and since 2008 and since Covid.

Not only is pay/ wage restraint imposed on workers – the proportion of national GDP going to labour/ the working class - is steadily diminishing- but there is, in addition, the withdrawing, the diluting, of various reforms such as legislation and regulations on working conditions, union rights, and the attack on social budgets, the social wage. As examples, in the UK major reforms such as the post - WW2 implementation of the National Health Service, and Pension Rights such as the official age of retirement, are being steadily degraded.

It is not simply that such progressive reforms being stripped away. It is more severe, worse than that. Reactionary anti-working class, anti-trade union (and sexist and racist) policy is imposed in the UK and elsewhere- policy on immigration, on asylum seekers, restrictions on the right to strike, restrictions on the right to protest are being enacted (and resisted!).

What left Social Democrats, Revisionist Reformist Marxists do *not* want is Marxist revolution, the replacement of Capitalism by socialism and ultimately, by Communism. They stop at Reforms.

As Kelsh and Hill (2006, 11) note,

Apple claims to be "deeply committed to social transformation" (2003: 17), but the "transformation" he speaks of is problematic. First, in actuality, it is quite limited. Second, it is, at the same time, a fantasy. He does not want to abolish the capitalist regime of wage-labour involving exploitation. He wants, for example, to "eliminate poverty through greater income parity" (2006: 68). Indeed, he argues not for transformation, but for a "politics of interruption" (2005: 392). This is a limited aim insofar as it leaves exploitation in place, capitalism unchallenged, and the repressive political and state forms of capital in control. It is also a fantasy because as Marx argued and as the world has seen, under capitalism, '[A]ccumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, *i.e.*, on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital. (Marx, [1867b] 1999b).

Jean Anyon's (2011) *Marx and Education* is criticised on similar grounds by Grant Banfield (2011), - 'A tenor of reformism echoes throughout *Marx and Education*' (with) 'the problems of capitalism described as problems of distribution' (Banfield, 2011). Anyon echoes Apple and other reformist left academics in criticising what she calls 'traditional Marxism' as opposed to what she calls 'neo-Marxism' for '(i) underplaying - or completely ignoring - non-class forms of oppression, (ii) tending to class reductionism and (iii) focusing on the economic at the expense of the social.' (Banfield, 2011)

Anyon tells us that education and education policy should be directed to 'assisting low-income students in their efforts to climb the socioeconomic ladder' (2011: 79)'. Banfield's biting critique is that 'outside of distributive tinkering, Anyon offers no vision beyond the horizon of capital. With no alternative vista, Anyon's message is that - '[R]evolution' appears an old fashioned concept (Banfield, 2011: 18)'.

For a discussion between Revolutionary anti-capitalist Marxist Educators and ‘Marxian’ or left reformist Educators, see, for example, Rikowski (2006); Kelsh and Hill (2006); Banfield (2011); on the one hand, and Apple (2006), McGrew (2011) (defending Jean Anyon in particular) and Saltman (2011) on the other. Classical Marxists, like Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg, welcome reforms, *without being reformist*. Rosa Luxemburg explained how ‘superficial and temporary changes to the economy did not constitute a fundamental break from the past’. Socialists cannot, Luxemburg argued, choose between reform and revolution as if they were choosing different sausages from the buffet of history (Cox, 2019). To quote Rosa Luxemburg ([1900b] 1999b),

That is why people who pronounce themselves in favour of the method of legislative reform *in place and in contradistinction to* the conquest of political power and social revolution, do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer and slower road to the *same* goal, but a *different* goal. Instead of taking a stand for the establishment of a new society they take a stand for surface modifications of the old society. If we follow the political conceptions of revisionism, we arrive at the same conclusion that is reached when we follow the economic theories of revisionism. Our program becomes not the realisation of *socialism*, but the reform of *capitalism*; not the suppression of the wage labour system but the diminution of exploitation, that is, the suppression of the abuses of capitalism instead of suppression of capitalism itself.

### *Economic State Apparatuses and Reforms/ Reformism*

It is not just the Capitalist Ideological and Repressive State Apparatuses (and those apparatuses supporting and reproducing the capitalist state and the labour force, such as the media, the education health and social security apparatuses of the state) that discipline the working class. It is also the *economic warfare*, the brute force and power of the Capitalist Class in the domain of labour, employment, wage suppression and repression, immiseration. This is one instance of where Classical Marxist analysis (such as in this article) disagrees

with 'Culturalist' neo-Marxist analyses with their advancing of arguments about the relative autonomy of State Apparatuses. The barrel of the gun ordered by the capitalist class crushes the relative autonomy of resistance. Where what Althusser described as 'Overdetermination' is trumped by Economic Determination and by fire and thunder, by troops and police on the streets maiming and killing protesters and strikers, and by the legal system persecuting, intimidating and goading reformist as well as Marxist resisters.

Thus, living during the current neoliberal capitalist period of pauperisation, immiseration of billions of workers worldwide, under the current, pronounced, 'Austerity Capitalism', I suggest that, in addition to ISAs and RSAs, we consider ESAs - Economic State Apparatuses - e.g., those apparatuses enforcing the repression and suppression of wages, the declining proportion of national income going to workers in wages and salaries, how 'labour has got a smaller and smaller share of economic output since the 1970s' (Chakraborty, 2023; Hill, 2022a). Together with ISAs and RSAs, ESAs are the state/capitalist apparatuses that work to reproduce the capitalist system, capitalist economic and social relations, the appropriation of the surplus value created by the labour power of workers - of all workers, black, white, male/female, gay/straight.

Connectedly, my critique of the neo-Marxist Althusser (Hill, 2001) was of Althusser's formulation that Economic Determination in the Last Instance means, in the last 'overdetermined' analysis (Althusser, 1962). Although Althusser did admit 'economic determination in the last instance', he added the important- and in my view, negating, qualification that, in overdetermined form, '*its bell never tolled*' (my italics). This, in my view, is over-emphasising the relative autonomy of the state and its apparatuses from capital, a relative autonomy being reined in, repressed in many states, during this current era of Austerity Neo-liberal Capitalism enforced by Conservative, Quasi-Fascist and Fascist authoritarianism. The bell of economic determinism is now tolling. Regarding the economy-state-education relationship, Ball suggests that,

While the social composition of the state ensures a sympathetic hearing for the interests of capital, the state also responds to other interests and has other concerns. There is no absolute relationship here between the political and the economic: the state develops and pursues its own independent purposes. Thatcherite education policies, in particular, are marked by a combination of the ideological, technocratic, pragmatic and popular. (cited in Hatcher and Troyna, 1994: 159) (Ball replied in Ball, 1994)

Critics of Revolutionary Marxism such as Michael W. Apple (and Kenneth Saltman and Ken McGrew) on the one hand, and Stephen J. Ball on the other, accuse Revolutionary Marxists of being economistic, deterministic and reductionist.

Ball (1994) typifies such Marxism as,

a theoretical analysis which is rooted in a conception of economic forms which have increasingly less relevance to the specifics of high-modernist, post-Fordist, multi-cultural western societies and a set of backward looking 'possibilities' arising from the critique of those forms ... In practice there are no conceptual links in the theoretical chain which they stretch from capital to educational practice. Because their a priori position eschews or trivialises mediation and interpretation they must rest their case upon untheorised or invisible relations between capital and the state, the state and policy and practice. (Ball 1994, 178-9, cited in Hill 2001).

Saltman (2011) makes similar critiques, describing the position held by writers such as me, Peter McLaren (in his revolutionary, i.e., 'Revolutionary Critical pedagogy' phases), Deborah Kelsh, Paula Allman, Glenn Rikowski and Mike Cole. Saltman (2011) comments on 'the new old Marxists embrace an anti-democratic vanguardism and class reductionism, continuing, 'Marxist economic reductionism has made a disturbing return to the field'. Saltman (2011) continues,

As Dave Hill, a leader of this perspective, announced at the annual American Educational Research Association conference in 2007: “Non-Marxist and Anti-Marxist political forces fail to recognize and combat the essentially class-based oppressive nature of Neo-Liberal Capital. Such forces include Extreme Right Racist/Fascist, Extreme Right Populist, Conservative neo-liberal, Neo-conservative, Third Way/ Revised Social Democratic (e.g., Die Neue Mitte/ New Labour), Christian Democratic, centre-Left Social Democratic, and religious fundamentalist movements and parties, whether they be Islamic, Christian, Jewish Hindu or other religions. ....Objectively, whatever our race or gender or sexuality or ability, whatever the individual and group history and fear of oppression and attack, the fundamental form of oppression in capitalism is class oppression.

My two main points of criticism of the work of Stephen J. Ball are both concerned with relative autonomy- the first concerns the relative autonomy debate around (*education*) *state apparatuses*, the link between Capital and Education state apparatuses. The second, related (also referring to relative autonomy) concerns the supposed degree of relative autonomy that *individual actors* in public institutions have, how much human agency they can exhibit in respect of transmuting, or colonising, of defying policy such as policy texts. Ball’s pluralist revision includes the 'writerly' emphasis on discourse and text, whereby, using Barthes, they suggest that rather than simply being ‘readerly’ texts, policy documents such as the National Curriculum are ‘writerly’ texts, where teachers can and do ‘re-write’ the policy. Ball and his co-writers suggest that the micro-political processes of schools provide the milieu for policy recontextualisation and mutual re-definition.

While schools are changing as a result, so too is the National Curriculum. This leaves us with the strong feeling that the state control model is analytically very limited. Our empirical data do not suggest that the State is without power. But equally...such power is strongly circumscribed by the contextual features of institutions, over which the state

may find that control is both problematic and contradictory in terms of other political projects. (Bowe and Ball with Gold, 1992: 120)

As I note (Hill, 2001: 12) in a section entitled 'Human Agency, Ball and Barthes: throwing out the baby with the Ba(r)thwater',

this potential to co-produce, to subvert the intentions of these Circulars is less potent than the power of the TTA and Ofsted to insist on their implementation... In a discussion of state policy, an emphasis on policy recontextualisation within Ball's policy cycle thesis gives too much power to human agency and underestimates the Hillcole Group's judgement on the Radical Right in education, that 'force, much more than consent has been the basis of its influence' (Hillcole Group, 1993: 4).

My riposte to the supposed autonomy of the state, and of individual state actors- e.g., teachers in classrooms, is that history is littered with the figurative – and the literal- corpses of state rulers, public servants, officials/ bureaucracies who were in fundamental conflict with the existing national dominant class, and who attempted to assert their autonomy. Not just corpses, also redundancy notices, dismissals, 'blacklisting', intrusive and debilitating surveillance, from the state and/or the employer. I am not alone in having been 'moved on', dismissed/made redundant (in my case, five times) because of my Marxist and trade union political activism/ pedagogy) - it is commonplace for socialist / Marxist and trade union political activists/ representatives.

This is one of the main points in my criticism of the CPA of Stephen J. Ball - his emphasis on the relative autonomy theory of the state and of state actors, an emphasis which serves to minimise the actual force of the capitalist state's coercion and repression.

The economic class war (waged by the ESAs) together with the ideological class war, are, spectacularly in this current period, enforced by the repressive class war- conservative authoritarianism and, pre-/proto-/ quasi-/ neo-/, actual Fascism. In Mandel's words (1976: 49, cited in Banfield, 2010: 131),

under capitalism, labour is essentially *forced labour*. Wherever possible, capitalists prefer hypocritically to cloak the compulsion under a smokescreen of 'equal and just exchange' in the 'labour market'. When hypocrisy is no longer possible, they return to what they began with: naked coercion.

### **3. Emphasis on Revolutionary Activism- on Political Organisation of the Class**

The third difference between Marxist and non-Marxist socialists is that, in order to replace capitalism, Marxists have to actually work to organize for that movement, for that action, through Activism. Revolutions do not happen by magic. Revolutions are not like apples- they do not fall off trees. Class consciousness - a subjective understanding of class society and of position - does not follow automatically or inevitably from the objective fact of economic class position. Hence both theoretical/ academic intervention, e.g., through policy analysis/ critique, policy development, as well as activist intervention in the Direct Action and the Electoral Arenas. Thus, a duty as a Revolutionary Marxist is as an *activist*, and a recognition that, as well as critique and analysis, political organization, programme development, intervention are necessary.

In relation to The First Principle of (Revolutionary and of Classical) Marxism: Emphasis on Class Analysis, such activists recognise that *There is a permanent ongoing material and ideological struggle over hegemony and over material power between Labour and Capital*, 'Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same: all these states, whatever their form, in the final



analysis are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie' (Lenin, [1918b] (1999b)).

Thus, while working for reforms and progress regarding anti-sexism, anti-racism, homophobia, for example, Revolutionary Marxist activists contest Intersectionalism, with its focus on identity politics and the politics of resistance and protest based on 'race', or gender or sexuality. Such identitarianism disables potential and actual class-based resistance. (Proletarian) Class Resistance is very different from identitarian politics and protest. 'Identity and class are not equivalent' (Léger, 2023, 12).

In relation to the second principle of (Revolutionary and of Classical) Marxism: Emphasis on Anti-Capitalist Socialist Revolution), Lenin ([1902] 1961) differentiates between reform and revolution by classifying struggles as 'political' (reforms) or economic (that is, changing the economic basis of society, replacing capitalism by socialism. (This is not to be confused with Lenin's critique of the limitations of purely 'trade union demands'- i.e., better wages, conditions, welfare benefits- and stopping at such demands. Lenin would refer to these trade union demands as reforms, as political demands). To return, then, to Lenin's differentiation between reform and revolution, the 'political' struggle and the 'economic struggle- in regard to the political struggle, 'the `class point of view' demands that the proletariat *give an impetus* to every democratic movement. The political demands of working-class democracy do not differ in principle from those of bourgeois democracy, they differ only in degree'. Thus, Marxists support the aims of Black Lives Matter, widening participation, 'Me-Too' demands regarding gender, reforms in general, 'democratic reforms.'

However, ‘In the struggle for economic emancipation, for the socialist revolution, the proletariat stands on a basis different in principle and it stands alone.’ (Lenin, ([1902] 1961). What is needed is a socialist revolution to replace, to get rid of, the capitalist economic system.

Apple calls for resistance, yet his call is limited to what I term ‘*resistance interruptus*’ - he calls for progressives ‘to both better understand and interrupt dominant socio/political relations in education’ (Apple 2013: 206). The understanding and interruptions, micro-resistances, are important - but Marxists want to go much further.

Revisionists/ Reformists, social democrats whether right-wing, or, left-wing social democrats such as Corbyn, Sanders, Mélenchon, Pablo Iglesias, together with, in the field of policy analysis, Critical Policy Analysts, have only interpreted the world. Or called for reforms, reformist changes. The point is, to change it. To use the classic quote from Marx’ *Theses on Feuerbach* ([1845] 2002), not any change, not just reforms, not just change for ‘the democratic republic’, but socialist change and the proletarian revolution.

As Lenin ([1918b] (1999b) writes:

It is often said and written that the main point in Marx’s theory is the class struggle. But this is wrong. .... Those who recognize only the class struggle are not yet Marxists; they may be found to be still within the bounds of bourgeois thinking and bourgeois politics. To confine Marxism to the theory of the class struggle means curtailing Marxism, distorting it, reducing it to something acceptable to the bourgeoisie. A Marxist is one who extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is what constitutes the most profound distinction between the Marxist and the ordinary small (as well as big) bourgeois. This is the touchstone on which the real understanding and recognition of Marxism should be tested. And it is not surprising that when the history of Europe brought the working

class face to face with this question as a practical issue, not only all the opportunists and reformists but all the Kautskyites (people who vacillate between reformism and Marxism) proved to be miserable philistines and petit-bourgeois democrats repudiating the dictatorship of the proletariat (Lenin, [1918b] 1999b)

The role of Revolutionary Marxists - as opposed to Revisionist/ Reformist Marxists and Social Democrats- Marxist public intellectuals is crucial. Marxist public intellectuals – such as the ‘political’ shop steward, or union organizer, the member of a socialist/ Marxist party or group, the teacher, the teacher educator, the poet, the filmmaker, the journalist, the youth worker, the agitator - intellectualise social, political, cultural, economic matters from the standpoint of what Gramsci (1971/ 2000) termed ‘good sense’, from a class - conscious perspective, or, to refer to a Classical Marxist injunction from *The Poverty of Philosophy*, (Marx, [1847] 1999) that the key political task facing communists is “[...] the formation of the proletariat into a class”, that is, a ‘class for itself’, a class aware of itself as a class in the Capital – Labour relation. As Marx and Engels ([1848c] 1999c) put in *The Communist Manifesto, Chapter 2: Proletarians and Communists* ‘The immediate aim of the Communists is the same as that of all other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat’.

Here is Marxists’ pedagogical importance, of party, organization, leaflets, newspapers, booklets, books, media and social media; here, as well as in the classroom, in conversation and in rhetorical speeches, we carry out the role of socialist analysis, of revolutionary pedagogy, of connecting the here and now of a rent strike, a pro-immigrant rally, an anti-austerity march, a picket line of a zero-hours contract employer, a Black Lives Matter or an Extinction rebellion march, an occupation of a tax avoiding multinational company owned shop.

These are valid and valuable reforms, *political* reforms. It is in connecting these with socialist class consciousness, demanding and propagandizing the need for an anti-capitalist, socialist revolution, a change in the economic relations of production, a change from capitalism, to a socialist and ultimately, a communist economy and society in which ‘class’ itself is abolished, in Lenin’s words, ‘[I]n the struggle for economic emancipation, for the socialist revolution, the proletariat stands on a basis different in principle and it stands alone.’ (Lenin, ([1902] 1961).

Here is Class Analysis, Revolution and Activism.

Here is *Marxist* Critical Policy Analysis, MCPA.

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