

The Antinomic Condition of the University: “Universal Labour” Beyond “Academic Capitalism”

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Abstract

This paper aims at identifying the characteristics acquired by the university under the regime of academic capitalism. It also attempts to put forward their antinomic relationship to the essential properties of academic activity, perceived in the light of the concept of “universal labour” introduced by Karl Marx.

Introduction

Presently, the discussion on the character of higher education and the institutional framework of the university touches upon fundamental issues of contemporary social relations. The scientific-technical revolution and the extensive transformation of science into a productive force signal dramatic changes for the prospects of society and culture. Knowledge is increasingly placed at the centre of human activity and, primarily, at the centre of social labour, thus largely shaping its content and character. This development directly affects the university, leading it closer to the system of production, and thus closer to the needs and demands of capitalist economy. The orientation of the latter toward the production of relevant surplus value and, consequently, toward continuous technological innovation, has currently turned production and the use of knowledge into an organic part of commodities production.

We can say that the place and role of universities in contemporary world manifest, on the one hand, the trend of the intellectualization of labour and the transformation of scientific knowledge into a direct productive force; on the other hand, they express the subordination of this trend to the globally dominant capitalist mode of production, whose key components are the exploitation of wage labour and commodity competition, aiming at appropriating maximum profit. Indeed, the current state of

science and higher education is critically affected by certain characteristics of capitalist economy, as they have been formed in the past three or four decades: the over-accumulation and concentration of capital on a global scale, the stagnation of mature capitalist economies, the crucial shift to the financialization and the global domination of the monopoly-financial capital (Foster & Magdoff 2009: 39-88). Of paramount importance is the fact that capitalist corporations facing major difficulties with profitable investment of accumulated capital in traditional economic sectors have launched (via international political institutions and national state apparatuses) the neo-liberal strategy aiming at the widest possible commercialization and privatization of the public sectors in economy and of the fundamental social services, such as health care and education.

The global crisis which started in 2008, as a consequence of the burst of speculative bubbles, with unforeseen dimensions and duration, is accompanied by the desperate effort of the capitalist world, and mainly finance capital, to protect its self by socializing its losses and putting the burden on millions of working people through harsh austerity measures. As concerns institutions of higher education, the global economic crisis pushes them toward an increasingly extreme neoliberal mutation, which signals their immediate servitude to capitalist interests, with their relevant organization, management and operation on the basis of business models; this phenomenon is defined through the concept of “academic capitalism”.

Keywords: Universal Labour, Academic Capitalism, Intellectual Labour, Antinomic Relationship, Higher Education, Knowledge, Marxism

The academic capitalism regime

The transformation of universities into institutions of academic capitalism refers to the process of their transformation into more or less autonomous, entrepreneurial subjects, which, in close ties with market forces, create and promote tradable knowledge and educational programmes. This transformation involves the development of an ever stronger relationship between universities and corporations in the fields of scientific research and the utilization of its results. As Michael Perelman notes, corporations pursue the funding of university scientific research and access to

its results, because it offers them specific benefits: first, university research is of lower cost and higher level than research in corporate labs, given the infrastructure universities have, the cheap labour of graduate students, and the more attractive academic environment; secondly, the funding of universities enables businesses to project a more philanthropic image; and third, by funding universities, corporations can shape the programmes of scientific research on a national level (2002: 99).

Linking universities with capitalist corporations also enables the latter to influence the results of scientific research, by forcing scientists who are funded by them to serve the interests and intentions of their supporters (Kleinman & Vallas 2001: 457; Bok 2003: 76). Quite often, corporations seek the silencing of outcomes from research projects they have funded, so that they have privileged access to valuable discoveries (Schiller 1999: 163). At times, they attempt to prevent scientific publications, because they are a threat to their business interests (Bok 2003: 73; Washburn 2006: 19-23).

These phenomena signal the reinforcement of secrecy in scientific research, with a strong negative impact on research institutes, researchers and the development of science. When scientists cannot discuss their work openly with other members of the academic community, then trust among them and relationships between colleagues are undermined; there could also be cases of repeating research projects, which have already been conducted by others in secret. Secrecy in research undermines scientific progress, since the latter largely depends on the ability of each researcher to work based on the discoveries of others (Book 2003: 112).

The prevalence of academic capitalism practices in universities derives from the fact that the knowledge they produce is perceived as a commodity that can be sold for profit. The financial significance of knowledge and the attempt to exploit it commercially leads to the development of mechanisms for its management and its subordination to intellectual property regimes. The widespread practice of enforcing rights of intellectual property on produced knowledge results in removing ideas, methods and techniques from fields of common access, despite the fact that these achievements of the human intellect are the highly necessary methodological foundations and means for the planning and implementation of new research programmes (Washburn 2006: 151).

We should note here that innovative scientific ideas and discoveries incorporate knowledge from a plethora of sources, and reflect the intellectual labour and achievements of many generations, which signals their universal-social character par excellence: “New works do not simply arise fully realized and wholly original from a single author, as copyright law implicitly holds. Creativity has its wellsprings, as well, in the sharing that takes place in a cultural commons” (Bollier 2003: 122).

Corporations that utilize accumulated scientific knowledge for their own purposes, usually reap the fruit of discoveries made many years ago mainly by scientific institutions engaged in basic research and funded by public funds (Perelman 2002: 75-76). Indeed, scientific progress achieved after World War II is due to research carried out in universities and major research labs operating free of business pressures (Perelman 2002: 85).

Within the regime of academic capitalism, there is an obvious trend of limiting basic research to the benefit of applied which is easier to exploit commercially (Schapper & Mayson 2005: 185). The free pursuit of knowledge, basic and long-term research, which is by nature extremely costly and time-consuming, is substituted by the problem solving, by new diverse configurations and uses of already existing knowledge. Academic capitalism in general does not tone with basic research. In conditions of fierce international competition, the extraction of economic benefit from university and publicly funded research is a matter of strong interest: “It is seen less in terms of need for new knowledge than in terms of commercialisation of what is already available; less a matter of research than of technology transfer” (Gibbons et al 1994: 86). Derek Bok, the former president of Harvard University, notes caustically that “much commercially profitable research is trivial from a scientific point of view”, as far as “the most important inquiries in science often involve questions no company will support because the answers take the form of general laws of nature that hold no special rewards for the enterprise that funds the research” (2003: 111).

Generally speaking, scientific research in its major and long-term pursuits is undermined by the very way capitalist economy functions, which is characterised by a utilitarian approach to natural and human resources, in order to achieve a direct and rapid increase of profit. The prevalence of private interests confines people’s focus to short-term, immediately beneficial goals, which results in indifference to the future of

society, to the coming generations, to the major challenges facing humanity. According to Lester C. Thurow's apt statement, the characteristically capitalist attitude to major social problems, such as the environmental problem, is that dealing with them is constantly passed on to future generations; in this case, however, the risk is that there will be a time in the future when it will be impossible to deal with them. As Thurow notes: "Each generation makes good capitalistic decisions, yet the net effect is collective suicide" (Thurow 1996: 303).

Another crucial field where the practices of academic capitalism are manifested are university curricula, which change in order to meet market needs, thus perceiving students as clients. University education is transformed into a marketable set of services, leading to its planning and provision in terms of profitability. This change involves the removal from curricula of subjects that have little or no value for the market economy. At stake are the humanities, social sciences and theoretical natural sciences, which cannot easily fulfil the ever changing demands of the labour market for skills and qualifications that have immediate use-value. Given, however, that the humanities and social sciences focus on the study of man him/herself in the diverse dimensions of his/her existence – they are a privileged field of reflection on the human condition and acquisition of self-knowledge – the observed shrinking of their curricula testifies to the fact that the regime of academic capitalism fundamentally undermines the comprehensive study and in-depth understanding of human existence.

The transformation of science into a direct productive force in capitalist society results in making universities primary sites of shaping the commodity of "labour power". Universities should provide workers, via undergraduate, postgraduate and life-long learning programmes, with specific tradable skills and qualifications, preparing them for the struggle for survival in an ever-changing labour market and in conditions of a globalized unregulated and very competitive economy. Evidently, we should have in mind that higher education as a site of shaping the modern "labour power" is determined by the necessity to educate individuals exactly as bearers of "labour power", i.e. a commodity whose use value lies in serving the profitability of capital. This signals the emergence of a large number of higher education institutes for the multitudes, who are destined to become wage labourers, with curricula that

provide a set of information with substandard elements of teaching and intellectual culture.

The academic capitalism regime undermines pedagogical relationships between teachers and students. The teaching of science and the initiation of students into scientific research traditions require strong pedagogical ties, via which critical and innovative thinking, a spirit of comradeship and devotion to scientific ideals are cultivated. But the transformation of the faculty into entrepreneurs, the turning of their interests to acquiring financial benefits significantly downgrades the focus on student needs (Slaughter & Leslie 1999: 166-167; Washburn 2006: 96-97). In many universities, dialogical experience is on the decline, while teaching in the form of seminars is currently extremely difficult due to the large number of students. Given the trend of a sharp increase in student numbers without the relevant increase in teaching staff, we are led to an inevitable dramatic decrease in providing customized attention to the needs of the former, while more anonymous methods of education are adopted in the form of mass lectures, distance learning, etc. (Smith & Webster 1997: 4). Thus, many universities are beginning to resemble knowledge factories (Aronowitz 2000: 34-35).

The standardization of university education in connection with its commercialisation and the wide spread of flexible/precarious forms of teachers' employment, undermine the autonomy of the faculty, destroying their professional skills (Schapper & Mayson 2005: 189-191). However, the personality of university teachers is a critical factor of scientific education. The teaching work of the faculty is a guided initiation of students into fields that daily experience can not reach, thus opening up new prospects in their intellectual development. Consequently, the existence of labour conditions that destroy the personality of university teachers inevitably leads to the decline of educational work.

Here we should note that if the true creator of knowledge is an integrated personality that can express innovative ideas, think systematically, perceive holistically and in depth a number of subjects, then the progress of cognitive activity in society can be achieved through the provision of the optimum conditions for the education of people in terms of multifaceted cultivation of their personality. However, in the mass

universities of modern capitalist society, the education of the many is downgraded into the acquisition of fragmented information, without the potential for substantial development of their intellectual skills. The various forms of mass studies, particularly in programmes implemented with the support of information technologies and e-learning methods, are cases of profitable business activity, since a large number of students-customers are taught by a small number of contingent faculty (Schell 2009). Of course, these cases of e-university have nothing to do with the cultivation of critical thinking; on the contrary, they are merely related to education via low cost methods intended for a large number of wage labourers as users of acquired knowledge, but not as its creators. According to Teresa L. Ebert and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, e-education is a “class technology” for transforming people “into highly efficient but cheap instruments of labour for capital” (2008: 130).

In contemporary capitalist economy, the hierarchical stratification of wage labourers as bearers of knowledge and specializations, corresponds to the hierarchical classification of higher education institutes, a small number of which offer high-level studies addressing the educational needs of the social elite, while the vast majority offer mass degrees for basic employability but not for social advantage and mobility (Newfield 2010: 13-16).

In addition to that, many students are either forced to seek work so that they cover their educational expenses, or are burdened with student loans because of the constant increase in the cost of education, even in state institutes (a phenomenon that has acquired sharp dimensions during the recent global economic crisis) (Williams 2009: 89-90). The provision of student loans is actually another form of subordination to finance capital. Moreover, in conditions where the acquisition of a degree does not lead to a stable and well-paid job or, at times, does not lead to any job at all, student loans can cause lifelong debt bondage.

Academic capitalism affects strongly the structure of universities and the relationships within the faculty. The diversity of roles carried out by universities weakens their integrity and makes it extremely difficult to adopt a common vision and perception of their mission. What unifies university departments is no longer a common academic culture, but a common bureaucratic administration (Scott 1995: 65, 140). In the new

market university, there is an inevitable distinction between academics whose work has commercial value and those whose work serves social needs. Moreover, departments with business activity maintain purely formal ties with academic institutions, operating as independent entities within the campus (Slaughter & Leslie 1999: 227). A crucial consequence of academic capitalism is the deepening inequality among the members of the academic community concerning the conditions of employment, compensation, obligations and rights. Forms of flexible and part-time employment for the research and teaching staff under contracts of different duration, that may or may not be renewed, are widespread practices. An ever increasing number of higher education teachers work in precarious conditions (Hendricks 2005: 602-605).

Another crucial consequence of the academic capitalism is that university management is detached from the traditionally self-administered institutions of the academic community and has acquired the properties of technocratic managerialism. The new type of university management is characterized by a centralism in decision making, the restriction of academic freedom, the widespread enforcement of the principles of competitiveness and economic efficiency. Significantly, representatives of the business world quite often participate directly in university administration (Slaughter & Rhoades 2004: 233-255).

Academic capitalism forces universities to use management models that subordinate academic work to a regime of constant assessment, control, and surveillance, according to the ideology of excellence and accountability, which treats academics as career rivals and consequently focuses on the need for an ongoing comparison, distinction, and ranking of their work. To ensure the comparability of academic work, primarily quantitative methods of assessment are adopted. These methods focus on the easily measurable aspects of academic research, such as the number of publications, the impact factor of journals, the number of citations to published papers, the number of participations in research projects, and the resources that were secured for the institution. As David Harvie comments, “Fundamental to the neoliberal project, as applied to the higher education system, is the quantification or valorisation of research, which is progressively alienating researchers from the product of their labour (academic research). If there is to be a strong link between

money and work in universities, then academic research work must be quantified” (2000: 110).

When relations of competition and alienation prevail within the academic community, then the work of its members can no longer be valued on the basis of its actual contribution to the development of the work of the others or its significance for the progress of humanity. This competitive relationship inherently approaches the evaluation of each scientific-intellectual activity based on the external criterion of its qualitative excellence.

The various assessment processes for academic labour, given that they are related to practices of homogenisation-standardization (inevitably, according to inconsequential elements), quantitative comparison and evaluation of its diverse research and educational aspects, result in neglecting its originality, failing to understand its truly groundbreaking-innovative aspects. Such a cumulative way of approaching academic activity leads to works of a superficial and conformist nature. Moreover, these practices of evaluating academic research are a clear example of dealing with scientific-intellectual labour on the basis of a predominately quantitative “reasoning” that largely characterises capitalist economy, as founded on the accumulation of capital, i.e. the subordination of each concrete labour to the appropriation of the maximum quantity of abstract labour. It is this competitive, cumulative “rationale” of the capitalist mode of production that forces it to abstract from the special characteristics of every concrete labour, and address it in terms of the quantity of its abstract, value-specific form.

The subordination of academic activity to assessment practices, primarily on the basis of standardized and competitive models of “productivity”, is a major factor of its undermining, distortion and decline. Typical is the case of the British “Research Assessment Exercise”, which led to the closure of many university departments that have been graded by 4 (on a 1-5 scale), undermining scientific education in total. As Steven Rose rightly notes, “universities demand the interaction of different disciplines: if a chemistry department closes, how can a university adequately teach, or research, biochemistry? And to teach science without philosophy is to risk creating a generation of narrow technicians” (2004).¹

The more the intellectual labour (as research and educational activity) is determined by mechanisms of a competitive quantitative assessment, and the stronger the control market forces exercise on it, the more it is imprisoned in serving conformist and short-term goals, the more it becomes stereotypical and superficial, failing to address broader needs and problems of humanity. The faculty members, to the extent they are subjected to the academic capitalism regime, are expended in career advancement tactics. As Stanley Aronowitz notes, “Symptomatically, we now speak of a corporate ‘culture’, which in the academy signifies a displacement of the old intellectual culture of the sciences, humanities, and the arts. Research and writing goes on, but it becomes increasingly instrumental to the overarching goal of individual survival, let alone advancement, in the academic hierarchy” (2000: 67).

According to the famous statement by Daniel Bell, the university was supposed to become the primary institution of the post-industrial society (Bell 1973: 44). In contemporary capitalism, the university as a privileged institution of scientific education and research actually acquires great economic importance. At the same time, precisely because it becomes increasingly capitalist, it is more difficult to ensure collectiveness and collegiality among the creators of knowledge, long-term innovative research and free dissemination of its outcomes, the substantial scientific education of students, elements which are extremely important for the cognitive activity and progress of humanity.

University as an institution of universal labour

The regime of academic capitalism undermines the fundamental characteristics of scientific-intellectual activity, of “universal labour”, as Marx called it: “universal labour is all scientific work, all discovery and invention. It is brought about partly by the cooperation of men now living, but partly also by building on earlier work” (1981: 199). Science as universal labour refers to work that is realized through universal means (linguistic symbols, ideas, theories), creations of world culture, which form the collective historic wealth of humanity. Scientific thought as universal labour draws on cognitive resources and is based on abilities that are related to the total of mankind’s cultural achievements. Science is essentially based on the entire previous evolutionary

course of thought and knowledge. That is why Marx considered science “the product of general historical development in its abstract quintessence” (1999: 391).

Science as universal labour does not produce any specific use value. It discovers natural forces and processes of ever larger scale, whose exploitation is the foundation for developing a plethora of technological and productive applications. The outcomes of science are incorporated in a broad range of people’s labour and cultural activities. Science produces specific “products” which nobody can appropriate through exchange, since they are never alienated from their creators and bearers. To appropriate the results of scientific labour no one need to exchange them with other goods of equivalent value. In the case of the creations of human intellect their exchange, as commodity exchange, is generally impossible, as it is impossible their consumption in the process of their use. According to Paul A. David and Dominique Foray “the same idea and its expression may be used repeatedly, and concurrently by many people, without being thereby ‘depleted’” (2003, 38). The “products” of science are transmitted, and become the property of others, through various cognitive-educational activities. Indeed, in this peculiar appropriation not only do they not wear out (as is the case with the consumption of use values), but they are enriched through the intellectual activity of other people, and develop as original universal-social creations.

At the same time, the results of science always have a unique dimension, i.e. that every individual process of scientific research and thought is connected with the specific personal cultural characteristics of each scientist. Therefore, they cannot be subjected to an abstract standardization and comparison. The results of universal labour cannot be considered an incarnation of abstract labour, of homogeneous physical energy expenditure. They represent an embodiment of cultural achievements, intellectual traditions, scientific qualifications and methods that everyone assimilates and utilizes in a unique, personal way. Indeed, it is precisely the uniqueness and originality of the scientific-intellectual labour of each personality that makes this labour interesting for others. The achievements of science as results of the intellectual activity of many different people are at the same time specific-unique and universal, internally connected to the common scientific-cultural traditions of humanity.

Science as universal labour is related to the predominately collective-social nature of cognition. The collaboration of people as bearers of intellect-consciousness and knowledge creators represents that specific “combination of social activity” (Marx 1973: 709) which, in conjunction with mechanized-automated means of production, makes science a direct productive force.

The universal character of science is also manifested in its prognostic-strategic function. The quintessence of scientific research consists in penetrating into the internal relations that determine the various objects, in widening our knowledge of the laws that govern nature and society, in the deep understanding of the crucial natural and social aspects of human existence. From this point of view, the importance of science consists in the discovery of new possibilities for the technological, cultural and social progress of humanity, in opening new horizons for the dynamic development of its transformative relation to the world.

Science is a universal activity, since its discoveries represent a great step ahead in the way we see reality. Science, as understanding of the fundamental laws of nature and society, contributes decisively to the formation of our world-view, and consequently of our mode of thought, social consciousness and culture.

Based on the above, we should note that the fundamental progress of science is determined primarily not by current needs of production and economy, but by the inner interest of people in knowing and understanding the world, by the pleasure given by research activity per se, in conjunction with a deep interest in wider social problems. The fundamental development of science as well as the education of knowledge workers, in a way that would enable them to carry out ambitious research programmes and open up new horizons for scientific thought, cannot be measured in terms of efficiency, using quantitative indicators and criteria of immediate economic results. The social effects and benefits of science are diffused throughout the entire evolution of society, in a great variety of theoretical and practical activities, in a multitude of applications. For this reason it is risky to finance science only on the basis of the expected economic utility of its achievements. The non-predictability of scientific research (of basic research) and its colossal social importance are the main reasons why its funding should be a matter of social care and planning.

The sheer necessity of fundamental research nowadays stems from the fact that modern society is based on a global system of complicated and large-scale productive activities that deeply affect the entire planet, the Earth surface, the subsoil, the atmosphere, the biosphere, even the near-Earth space. The importance of basic science is directly linked to the emerging need for collective social planning and managing contemporary forces of production, which demands a perpetual maximization of the ability to predict the consequences of their function on man and the environment. In current conditions, the scientific study of global society as a system, in its relation with the entire global environment, is of paramount importance. Given that this relationship is inherently unstable and forms a dynamic-controversial transformation process of the global environment by humanity, which constantly brings forward new conditions (the case of an equilibrium and stability in this relationship is deemed impossible), basic scientific research is existentially necessary in order for humanity to be able to respond to constantly unprecedented and ever-growing challenges. Fundamental research is called upon to create the necessary preconditions for new historic-cultural steps of humanity, in the direction of a further broadening of the ways through which it can exist and develop.

The university, precisely as the main institution of basic scientific thought and research, will have to be a privileged site for reflection on science itself, on its epistemological and ethical foundations, on the socio-cultural significance of its uses. We could claim that the university will have to be an institution of social self-awareness, studying and understanding human existence in its entirety, realizing and evaluating alternative possibilities and prospects for humanity. Therefore, the university will have to ensure the possibility of uncompromised critical reflection on all material and spiritual aspects of social totality, as a necessary condition for the implementation of innovative research projects and the pursuit of original solutions to complex social problems. Noam Chomsky's statement is quite pertinent: "In its relation to society, a free university should be expected to be, in a sense, "subversive". We take for granted that creative work in any field will challenge prevailing orthodoxy" (1969: 181).

Based on the above, the university can only be an institution for the comprehensive study of human world, not in the sense of abolishing specialization and the division of

scientific research, but of breaching the rigid - alienating forms of this division. We should note that the fragmentary - utilitarian attitude toward nature and society that characterizes capitalism, the generalized fragmentation of social consciousness that stems from the daily experience of social alienation (the drift toward empiricism is an inevitable consequence of this fragmentation), as well as the expansion of rivalry and alienation within the institutions of science lead to a peculiar academic autism, a deep trenching of scientific fields, whose particularly painful dimension is the alienation between natural and social sciences.

These two categories of scientific knowledge concern the study of the two objectively interlinked, fundamental spheres of human existence: first, the relationship of man with nature and especially the productive interaction with the latter; and secondly, the labour-social bond among individuals. Thus, the perception of science under the light of the prospect of social emancipation and establishment of social unity among men brings to the forefront the need for establishing a cognitive unity between the different fields of their existence and action. According to V.A. Vazjulin: "Science that corresponds to developed, mature human society is mainly synthetic, internally unified science; knowledge, the understanding of nature and the awareness of society become internally united different moments within this science" (1988: 157).

The function of the university as a privileged site of synthetic perception of the human world is related not only to hosting the basic fields of natural-technological and social sciences, to the interdisciplinary collaboration between these two fields of knowledge, but also to the cultivation of philosophical thought as an intellectual activity that does not simply reflect natural and social reality, as something objective, but also identifies behaviours, attitudes, choices, aims that give meaning to human existence within this reality. The special significance of philosophy for human life lies in the fact that it reflects on the relationship between people as subjects (including the cognitive relationship) and objective reality; within this context, philosophy does not merely study what exists, but also traces what could exist, the prospect of social evolution, the ideal human condition. Philosophy deals with the meaning, purpose and ideal of human life and thus becomes a necessary guiding element for each individual scientific study of the human condition.

To the extent that science has increasingly become a productive force, the promotion of scientific and technological progress is achieved through the development-improvement and generalization of the scientific education of labourers. The modern nature of productive activity, as it is determined by the intellectualization of labour, does not require the narrow and rigid specialization of people, which fragments their personality and makes its further development impossible; on the contrary, it needs an emphasis both on the transmission of fundamental knowledge within specific disciplines, and the cultivation of personality's general intellectual abilities and creative forces, which allow the self-activating and sustained engagement with knowledge, the true life-long learning.

The university as a key institution of “universal labour”, of scientific research and education, needs to be organised and function on the basis of camaraderie-collaborative relationships among its members. These relationships should be suitable for the continuous development of its members, for the creative combination of their intellectual abilities and the free transmission-dissemination of their knowledge and ideas. The university, which is consistent with the essential characteristics of scientific-intellectual activity, can only be a cooperative self-governing community of people, inspired by a common devotion to intellectual pursuits and learning, and guided by a deep sense of responsibility for the social implications of their work.

The function of the university as a self-governing cooperative community is a necessary condition for the authentic progress of scientific thought and pedagogical work, which is meant to serve the collective social needs and interests. The prevalence of camaraderie relations within the academic community is a necessary condition for the cultivation of a moral attitude toward humanity, which fulfils an important inner demand of science. If the goal of scientific research is the objective reflection of reality, then we have to agree with Terry Eagleton's statement that there is a deep relation between objectivity and ethics: “Objectivity can mean a selfless openness to the needs of others, one which lies very close to love” (2004: 131).

Scientific research is becoming increasingly international, and is carried out on the basis of global academic networks. The major new steps in science are the result of the collective efforts of a large number of scientists from different countries around

the world. In conditions where science is becoming the most collaborative social activity on the planet, the function of the universities should be founded on the principles of internationalism, universal comradeship, collectivism and solidarity, in connection with the development of an international approach to the big problems of humanity and to the strategy of scientific inquiry.

University and social struggle

Academic work, as scientific research and education, is inherently collective, communal and international, reflective and prognostic, and therefore of strategic importance for human existence and the development of social transformative activity. Academic work is inherently a universal, predominately social activity of humans, and therefore can thrive only beyond academic capitalism and capitalism in general. Academic work, as universal labour, can thrive only in its connection and engagement with the fundamental and universal issues of human existence, in service to collective social progress, and consequently in the struggle against the relations of class exploitation, antagonism and social alienation.

The university as a key institution of scientific education is trapped in a crucial opposition. On the one hand, the emergence of science as a productive force presupposes labourers with general intellectual-cognitive skills, well-versed in many fields, and creative; this requires the overall expansion of learning opportunities and possibilities, and mainly the education of people in a way that makes them creators and not merely bearers and users of knowledge. On the other hand, the dominant capitalist relations of production make the wage-labourer a mere medium for the production and appropriation of surplus value, thus undermining the conditions and institutions of his/her education, fragmenting it and inhibiting his/her development. The commercialization of university studies in times of financialization of the economy and penetration of capital in all fields of human reproduction, in order to broaden its profitability margin, show the great difficulty of capitalist system to secure for all people the opportunity to become authentic subjects of knowledge. We can say that universities have become sites for the manifestation of the fundamental opposition of capitalist society between, on the one hand, the developing social nature of labour (whose critical dimension is its intellectual-cognitive content) and, on the

other, the still dominant capitalist relations of production, which undermine, distort and destroy the social nature of labour, as well as scientific research and education as forms of universal, predominately social, activity.

The subjection of universities to interests that are alien to the needs of society inevitably turns them into a field of social struggle. It should be underlined that the closer the universities get to the capitalist system of production and the more they become the major field for the formation of the commodity “labour power”, the closer they get to the class contradictions and conflicts of capitalist society. Moreover, recent mass struggles primarily of the student movement but also of the academic staff in many countries around the world against both the neoliberal mutation of the university and the capitalist exploitation of intellectual labour are a highly important phenomenon, given that they mark the trend of radicalization of both current and prospective knowledge workers.

At the same time, since science is essentially related to a deeper understanding of the world and an identification of alternative prospects for humanity, the university, as a privileged locus of science, to the extent that it becomes the site of emancipatory social struggles, can also become the site of radical thought, of an awareness and promotion of the emancipatory potential of society. But this is possible only in close connection of the academic communities with the broader social struggles for emancipation.

We should note here that scientific research and intellectual labour, in general, cannot be productive without being linked to manual labour, which (due to the deficient-partial automation of the means of production) still exists in a large scale within the global capitalist system. Scientific-intellectual work cannot produce value / surplus value on its own. However, it participates in its production as an organic part of the entire socially necessary labour, i.e. in its link to the entire amount of manual labour. If the appropriation by capital of modern mechanized-partially automated means of production (which represent an implementation of scientific knowledge) enables it to dominate over manual labour, at the same time its dominance over direct producers, that is, its function as a connecting link of the production system, enables it to control the applications of science and, consequently, the activity of knowledge workers, even

if quite often the result of this control is extremely destructive to scientific research and education. Thus, the prospect of an emancipation of science and its key institution, the university, from the hegemony of capital is an integral part of the overall emancipation of social labour from the system of class exploitation.

Living today in conditions of an extremely harsh global economic crisis of capitalism, and experiencing the massive destruction of human productive forces, given that thousands of the representatives of manual and intellectual labour become redundant (which further aggravates their living conditions), it is worth remembering the words of Karl Marx: “only the working class can ... convert science from an instrument of class rule into a popular force, convert the men of science themselves from the panderers to class prejudice, place-hunting parasites, and allies of capital into free agents of thought! Science can only play its genuine part in the republic of labour” (1974: 259).

Notes

1. The closure of university departments under criteria of competitiveness and market efficiency (one of the recent, and quite indicative cases was that of Middlesex University Philosophy Department – see Wolff 2010) is a destructive policy for science and culture; it reveals the fact that the prevalence of the law of capital accumulation causes intellectual and material poverty in conditions of tremendous wealth, thus rendering human cultural forces redundant, as long as they are not of any use to capitalist economy.

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