

Higher Education and Class: production or reproduction?

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Abstract

This article deals with questions relating to the role of education and especially Higher Education in the reproduction of class division in society. Social classes and how they are formed and reproduced has always been one of the greatest challenges for Marxism and social theory in general. The questions regarding the role of education, and especially Higher Education, in these processes have been particularly important. In the 1960s and 1970s theorists such as Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas stressed the role of Higher Education, as an Ideological State Apparatus, in reproducing class structure as part of their broader role in the reproduction of the conditions of capitalist power and exploitation. In contrast to this position since the 1990s theoretical interventions, coming from the theoretical traditions of workerism and post-workerism, have insisted on the centrality of entrepreneurial Higher Education as a site of production of class divisions, through a theorization of the importance of immaterial labour in contemporary cognitive capitalism. The article attempts to present, and critique, these two contrasting positions and to offer an alternative reading of Higher Education as a hegemonic apparatus articulating class strategies into research and education

policy, internalizing in this process the main contradictions of contemporary capitalist production.

Key words: Higher Education, social theory, class, social reproduction, Althusser, Poulantzas, workerism, immaterial labour.

Introduction: class and social reproduction in the Marxist tradition and today's open questions

Critical educational theory has always dealt with questions of social class. Treating education as a mechanism reproducing class division, hierarchy and inequality has been one of main motives behind most critical and radical writings on education. Questioning this role of education, and particularly Higher Education, in the reproduction of class relations has been not only a theoretical tenet but also a political position in struggles regarding access to education, funding and curricula – struggles that demanded reforms and changes in education that would undermine the reproduction of class divisions.

Marxist debates on social classes have been an important part of the broader theoretical discussion on class formation and reproduction. In the Marxist tradition social class is not simply a descriptive category registering the existence of social inequality and the emergence of collective identities and differential life-chances. It is also a strategic theoretical concept. For Marxism, history is defined as a history of class *struggles* and class antagonism is presented as being at the centre of the different historical modes of production (Marx – Engels 1970, pp. 30-31). Moreover, for Marxism social class is linked to social emancipation, since the working class is presented as being inherently anti-capitalist.

What is more important is that the Marxist conception of social class is not simply a theory of class antagonism. Class is linked to a theory of the social relations of production. In the case of the capitalist mode of production, what we see is not only the generalization of commodity circulation and exchange, but also a particular set of social relations of production leading to various forms of formal and real subsumption of labour to capital, as the result of relations of power and ownership within production. These have to do with the means of production and their use, the ability to buy labour power, the allocation of resources and the selling of the products of labour, the organization, rhythms and times of production, but also with coping with the various forms of resistance within capitalist production.

These social relations and practices are constantly reproduced within production and take the form of imperatives that the capitalists must comply with in order to gain a share in competitive markets through differentials of labour productivity. This process leads to the constant production and reproduction of specific roles, practices, positions, and subjectivities. Consequently, the line of demarcation between the owners of the means of production and workers is constantly being redrawn. That is why class in the Marxist tradition is always linked not to stratification of earnings, life chances, real and symbolic capital, but to *exploitation* (Wright ²2004). Exploitation always implies and opens up some form of resistance to exploitation, even in the silent way of not fully conforming to the tasks or rhythms required. The centrality of exploitation as a structurally antagonistic relation implies a much more relational, dialectical – in the sense of mutual and reciprocal determination – and strategic-political conception of class antagonism than envisaged by non-Marxist theories of social stratification.

However, social class has been one of the most open questions in the Marxist theoretical tradition. Ever since Marx's 3rd Volume of *Capital* ending abruptly at the beginning of the discussion of social classes (Marx 1991: 1025-1026), questions regarding the formation and reproduction of social classes have always led to lively debates within Marxism as a theoretical tradition. Are social classes pre-existing social entities, which subsequently engage in struggle and battle or are they formed in struggle and social practices as E.P. Thompson has suggested (Thompson [1963]2002)? Are they common identities constantly formed and re-formed through social practice? Do they represent an 'objective condition' or a form of consciousness? How are relatively stable forms of social stratifications, boundaries, identities reproduced through myriads of everyday singular practices?

Moreover, as Étienne Balibar (1994) has noted, it is not easy to theorize this causal and analytical relation between social relations (and especially relations of production) and social classes. For Balibar we can see this in the difference and unevenness in the Marxist discourse between labour as a structural aspect of the capital-labour relation and the proletariat as a potential political force and collective subject (Balibar 1994, pp. 125-149).

Class formation implies class reproduction, in terms of the ways classes, as collective sets of social agents, are reproduced and the practices and institutions that play a role in these processes. Education has been central in the theoretical discussion of such issues, in the sense of its role in the reproduction of hierarchies and divisions in society. Different educational trajectories lead to different class positions, and in schools, vocational colleges and universities or during apprenticeships we can see the acquisition of attitudes and identities, not only skills.

In the long history of the debates on social reproduction and education at least two theoretical dangers (and temptations) have emerged. One is *functionalism* in the sense of a conception of society as system able to foresee its needs and have specific institutions – such as education – fulfilling specific functions, in a certain teleological fashion. The other is *structuralism* not in the sense of a particular theoretical trend but in the more general sense of a theorization of society based upon the assumption that deep or latent structures are the substance of society and determine the functioning of particular institutions

Contemporary debates about radical politics tend to avoid thinking in terms of class politics. This has been the result of an earlier emphasis on ‘new social subjects’ and more recently of thinking not in terms of social classes but more of collective subjects emerging through social and political demands. From the “Multitude” of the early 2000s (Hardt and Negri 2000), as the aggregation of all those opposing the capitalist ‘Empire’, to the current image of the ‘99%’ as opposed to the ‘1%’, we have metaphors which are powerful in terms of articulating a sense of collective anger and protest against global capital, but do not enable an actual theoretical analysis of social classes and alliances. However important politically and symbolically these notions are, as expressions of a new radicalism, we still need to reopen the debate on classes and class reproduction.

To reopen the debate on classes we must also deal with new theoretical propositions regarding the role of education in class formation. Radical theorists since the 1990s have pointed to the increased tendency towards the entrepreneurialization, commodification and commercialization of practices and institutions traditionally associated with social reproduction, including schools and universities. They use this as evidence that we must

abandon the production / reproduction dividing line and instead understand education as a production site of social classes as well as knowledge. Consequently, struggles in Higher Education, can be seen as forms of the antagonism between living labour and capital. Therefore, the question whether higher education produces social classes or classes are produced outside of education and are reproduced within education, has a broader theoretical and political significance.

In what follows I will begin by revisiting Althusser's and Poulantzas theorization of class reproduction through the intervention of Ideological Apparatuses of the State (Althusser 1971; Althusser 1995; Poulantzas 1975). I choose Althusser and Poulantzas because they presented some of the most influential Marxist theories of the reproduction of social classes and the role of education in this process. I then move on to theorists that tend to treat higher education as production, especially those theorists that have been associated with varieties of what has been designated as the workerist and post-workerist traditions, namely those theorists that take their inspiration from the Italian *operaismo* and *Autonomia* theoretical and political traditions (Wright 2002). Finally, I attempt to offer an alternative to the class production / reproduction divide by suggesting that we can follow Gramsci (1971) in treating Higher education as a *hegemonic apparatus*, a conception which can help us conceptualize the relation of Education to class strategies within and outside capitalist production.

1. Althusser and Poulantzas on ideology and education as social reproduction

In this section I focus on two Marxist theoretical interventions that attempted to offer a theory of the reproduction of social classes in society

with particular emphasis on the role of education: Louis Althusser's theory of ideology and ideological state apparatuses and Nicos Poulantzas' theory of social classes.

1.1. Louis Althusser's On Reproduction and the primacy of the relations of production

Within the Marxist tradition Louis Althusser's essay on Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses has been widely debated in relation to questions about the reproduction of social classes.² It is important to go back to this theoretical intervention in order to reconstruct the underlying theoretical argument, by reading not the 1970 article but the whole manuscript *Sur la reproduction (On Reproduction)* from which the article was taken.

Althusser's *On Reproduction* is not simply about ideology. It is about the reproduction of the relations of production, part of a broader project to redefine Marxist theory and philosophy.³ Althusser begins by stressing the importance of the question of the relation between the forces and relations of production. In the Marxist tradition for many years the prevailing position had been the primacy of the forces of production over relations of production.⁴ A surface reading of the preface of Marx's 1859 *Critique of Political Economy* seemed to offer justification to this position

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely, relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general

process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existences that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms – with the property relations within the framework of which they have hitherto operated. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. (Marx [1859] 1987, p. 263)

However, the danger of such a reading is that it can lead us to some form of technological determinism. If forces of production have the determinant role, then human history is no longer a history of class struggles and social relations and becomes a history of different technological systems. Althusser's divergence from the traditional reading of this text is evident in his insistence that "on the basis and *within the limits* of the existing Forces of Production, *the Relations of Production play the determinant role*" (Althusser 1995, p. 44). Althusser elaborated more on this in an Appendix titled "On the Primacy of the Relations of Production to Forces of Production". He insisted that Marx's 1859 Preface is an ambiguous text that "became the Bible of the 3rd International and Stalin" (Althusser 1995, p. 242). Althusser relates this passage to Marx's well known passages in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, which can be read as indicating that productive forces have their corresponding productive relations.⁵ Althusser attributes the distortion he sees in the 1859 preface, which makes no reference to class struggle, to Marx re-reading Hegel's *Great Logic*, which, according to Althusser, led Marx to a "100% Hegelian" (Althusser 1995, p. 246) conception of the non-correspondence or contradiction between old form and new content. Moreover, in his view, this Hegelian conception of the transition to superior forms can easily lead to the teleological evolutionism of the 3rd

International and Stalin, whereby changes in the forces of production automatically result in changes in the relations of production. For Althusser, Marx's *Capital* "protests against this Hegelianism" (Althusser 1995, p. 248). However, Althusser insists that in contrast to Stalin, Lenin and Mao insisted on the primacy of the relations of the production, and Althusser points to the fact that both Lenin and Mao ignored warnings that conditions were immature for revolution because of the underdevelopment of the forces of production. In contrast, it was exactly his insistence on the primacy of the forces of production that marked Stalin's turn after 1930-32.⁶

Althusser insists that relations of production are never simply juridical relations of property, they are "relations of capitalist exploitation" (Althusser 1995, p. 53) and he makes a reference to Marx's conception of surplus value extraction as proof. For Althusser this exploitative character is not the result of some sort of capitalist malice but of the very nature of capitalism as a mode of production that has as its objective "the production of surplus value" (Althusser 1995, p. 57). Consequently for Althusser "the relations of production radically determine *all* the apparently "technical" relations of the division and organization of labour" (Althusser 1995, p. 58).

For Althusser, contrary to traditional (Second and Third International) Marxist productivism, there is almost nothing that is merely technical in the social division of labour. He believes this is why the manual labour posts and lower technician posts are occupied by members of the working class, posts having to do with conception and partial direction are taken by other social strata, and executive posts by members of the bourgeoisie. We should understand that, for Althusser, there is a *class* line of demarcation between workers, engineers and higher officials or

managers, which is based on a certain monopoly that engineers or managers have over certain forms of knowledge and ‘know-how’. Althusser does not underestimate the central role social relations such as private property and ownership of means of production play in capitalism. But he insisted that we must also pay attention to hierarchies within the production process associated with different educational levels. Therefore for Althusser:

The division into social classes is present in the division, the organization and the direction of the process of production, *by means of the division of posts as a function of the classes* (and the corresponding educational ‘formation’, more or less short’ or long) where the individuals that occupy these posts, belong. (Althusser 1995, p. 61)

Although for Althusser there is a repressive element in capitalist relations of production, it is wrong to think of them as primarily repressive instead of exploitative. But how does exploitation ‘work’? For Althusser this is the result of certain aspects of capitalist production: First, the fact that proletarians are obliged to work in order to live. Secondly, the material *dispositif* of capitalist production, exemplified in the Taylorist production chain, imposes a certain rhythm of work. Thirdly there is the importance of ideology, the “bourgeois juridical illusion according to which ‘work is paid at its value’” (Althusser 1995, p. 67), the juridical moral ideology that insists that contracts must be respected and the technocratic and economist ideology that justifies the social division of labour. And it is on the basis of this analysis that Althusser reaches the conclusion that relations of production are neither technical nor juridical relations (Althusser 1995, p. 69).

1.2 Ideology and the reproduction of relations of productions.

Althusser's 1970 essay has often been presented as being more preoccupied with presenting a theory of ideology *in general*, the reason being that the section on ideology seems like the centre of Althusser's investigation. It is there that we find the reference to ideology as having no history (Althusser 1971, p. 159), the definition of ideology as what "represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser 1971, p. 162), the insistence on ideology having a "material existence" (Althusser 1971: 165) in rituals and practices, and the position that ideology "*has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects*" (Althusser 1971, p. 171). But a closer look at the broader scope of the original project and the 1969 manuscript makes obvious that Althusser aimed not simply at a general theory of ideology and the reproduction of ideological forms. His aim is a theory of the reproduction of the relations of production and social forms.

On reproduction marks Althusser's distancing from the structuralism of his earlier works which exemplified the original conception of structural causality in the sense of latent structures conditioning 'surface' social phenomena (Althusser and Balibar 1970). This shift was the result of a process of theoretical self-criticism on the part of Althusser, which centred upon the rejection of any conception of deep structures as hidden scripts to be followed by social agents. Instead Althusser tried to rethink social forms and relations in terms of singular practices and non-teleological encounters between the elements of a 'structure'. Part of this turn was an insistence on structures as lasting encounters, as relations that can last. But how is this ability to last achieved? Indeed this has been the main question facing social theory since the 19th century: how do social

forms reproduce themselves, how do societies maintain this kind of stability? How can we combine the singularity of practices with the relative stability of social forms and modes of production?

This is when the *concept* of apparatuses and practices emerges in the work of Althusser. Social forms can last and we can have lasting forms and relations because social practices can be reproduced through apparatuses that guarantee their reproduction, mainly through the reproduction of ideological interpellations that make human subjects accept certain practices as being in the ‘nature of things’. Instead of a previous emphasis on structural determination, here the emphasis is on *reproduction* and *repetition* through practices. This takes place in everyday life, in the habits, attitudes and identities inculcated in workplaces, but it also requires the particular effectivity of State Apparatuses. This is evident in the definition of State Apparatus as a “*system of institutions, organizations and corresponding practices*” (Althusser 1995, p. 109). We are dealing here with a broadening of the notion of the State. For Althusser the State does not simply represent a repressive *mechanism*, it is a set of a broader *practices* that enable social reproduction. Consequently, State power is an expression of social power not simply as coercion but as the ability to enable this kind of reproduction. All this has to do with the temporality of reproduction; the question is how to enable the durability of a mode of production.

We easily understand that if a mode of production lasts as long as the system of State Apparatuses that guarantee its conditions of reproduction (reproduction = duration) of its base can last, that is of its relations of production, we have to attack the system of State Apparatuses and take State power and interrupt the conditions of the *reproduction* (= duration = existence) of a mode of production and put in place new relations of production. (Althusser 1995, p. 182).

Althusser does not underestimate the importance of coercion or the repressive apparatuses of the State, but – in line with most classical Marxism and Social Theory – he holds to the theoretical premise that most of the time people tend to reproduce social forms and practices mainly because they think it is rational or right to do so. Not only is this whole process traversed by class struggles, but ideological class struggle has preceded social and political revolutions:

It is not by chance that all the big social revolutions that we know rather well and in detail, the French Revolution of 1789, the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Chinese Revolution of 1949, were preceded by *a long class struggle*, that wound not only *around* the existing Ideological State Apparatuses, but also *inside* these ideological apparatuses (Althusser 1995, p. 191).

For Althusser ideology is not being produced within Ideological State Apparatuses, since he insists that ‘it is not institutions that “produce” the corresponding ideologies but the *elements of an ideology (the ideology of the state) that “are being realized” or “exist in” the corresponding institutions and their practices*’ (Althusser 1995, p. 113). For Althusser the Ideology of the State is not produced by the State; rather it is a more generic term for a unity of different ideological elements emerging outside of these apparatuses but within the class struggle (and then processed within ideological apparatuses) and designates the unity in contradiction of the dominant ideology. As he expresses it:

The ideological apparatuses of the State *realize*, in the material dispositif of each apparatus and in their own practices, an ideology that is *exterior to them* [...] which we can now call by its name: *The ideology of the State*, the unity of the essential ideological themes of the dominant class or dominant classes. (Althusser 1995, p. 113).

Althusser's insistence that ideologies are reproduced through practices and rituals within apparatuses is particularly important. Despite all the shortcomings or its schematic character it offers a way to rethink the reproduction of ideologies, classes and social forms through the endless repetition of singular practices, within material apparatuses, a conception very similar to Foucauldian technologies of power and *dispositifs*.⁷

Material dispositif, apparatuses, practices: these are the concepts on which Althusser bases his theory of the *reproduction* of ideological elements – not simply as beliefs, but as articulations of knowledge, misrecognitions, ways to behave, practices to be repeated – that are themselves mainly external to these apparatuses. It is obvious that Althusser's main preoccupation is not 'ideology in general' but ideological apparatuses of the state and their role in the reproduction of ideologies and consequently in the reproduction of relations of production.

1.3 Ideology, social reproduction and education

Therefore the notion of 'ideology' in Althusser has the more general sense of social reproduction and not simply social misrecognition. That is where education enters the stage. Education is exactly where the future holders of certain social positions get their know-how not only (and not mainly...) in terms of formal knowledge but mainly of conformity to ideological rituals and practices. For Althusser the educational system does not simply offer knowledge but also certain various forms of "*savoir-faire*", rules and forms of behaviour that correspond to the social division of labour. For Althusser:

[T]he reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules

of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class 'in words'.

(Althusser 1995, p. 78; Althusser 1971, pp. 131-132)

That is why for Althusser the educational system in developed capitalist social formations is the dominant ideological apparatus of the state (Althusser 1995: 173). Althusser announces in the manuscript a forthcoming book on schools, perhaps a reference to Christian Baudelot and Roger Establet's *L' école capitaliste en France* (The Capitalist School in France) which appeared in 1971. In that book, Baudelot and Establet present a theory of the role of education in class reproduction through the existence of two different school networks, one that leads to higher education and one that leads to technical and vocational training. Bourgeois ideology is inscribed in schools norms, ensuring that working class kinds are oriented towards the technical and vocational network, because of their supposed lack of merit. Consequently, education contributes to the reproduction of the division of intellectual and manual labour and the basic class divide in society.

Althusser himself did not write much about Higher Education. His 1964 article on Student Problems (Althusser [1964] 2011), which drew a lot of criticism because of his apparent support of traditional academic hierarchy (Rancière 2011), was written before the elaboration of his theory of ideology. However, his theorization of ideology and social reproduction was more than influential in developing a critical discourse on education, since it linked the educational apparatus to the reproduction of social relations of production and consequently social classes. By insisting on the possibility of conflict, struggle and revolt within

education, as an expression of broader social struggles, it also offered a theoretical justification for radical educational movements and demands.⁸ His positive appreciation of the 1968 student revolt exemplifies this (Althusser [1969] 2003).

Despite Althusser's not writing much about education, his work can provide us with a way to theorize the relation between social class, social reproduction and education. Althusser's emphasis on both the primacy of the relations of production and on the role of ideological state apparatuses in the reproduction of class relations, avoided the danger of economism did not fall into a restricted conception of social reproduction based only on symbolic capital, such as the one offered by Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), and is theoretically compatible with more concrete radical educational theory such as radical curriculum theory (Apple 1990).

1.4 Poulantzas on social classes and their reproduction.

Of all the people associated with Louis Althusser's conception of Marxism – although never a member of Althusser's close circle of collaborators – Nicos Poulantzas was the one who elaborated more on the question of social classes and their reproduction. Poulantzas's conception of social classes is one that treats class struggle and antagonism as being constitutive of social classes: 'social classes involve in one and the same process both class contradictions and class struggles' (Poulantzas 1975, p. 14). This is based on a conception of production as class struggle: "Production [...] means at the same time and as one and the same process, class division, exploitation, and class struggle" (Poulantzas 1975, p. 21).

Poulantzas' intervention was also instrumental in the introduction of the importance of political and ideological relations in class formation. This was necessary for the theorization of the 'new petty bourgeoisie', which for Poulantzas included those wage earners associated with increased qualifications and higher education that could not so easily be included into the proletariat. Poulantzas' theorization avoids both the empiricism of the concept of the 'middle class' but also the temptation to treat all wage earners as 'workers'. For Poulantzas the class determination of the new petty bourgeoisie could not be determined unless we add to economic relations, such matters as the division between manual and intellectual labour, political and ideological relations within production and reproduction (Poulantzas 1975, p. 224 ff.).

For Poulantzas the question was one of relations of power, political and ideological, within production, materialized in the division between manual and intellectual labour and all the conditions, rituals and institutions (including the hierarchy of formal education degrees) that enable technicians and management personnel to hold to their 'secret of knowledge' and perpetuate a class line of demarcation with ordinary workers.

I do not wish to underestimate the problems with Poulantzas' theorization of the 'new petty bourgeoisie', especially his insistence on associating the working class with productive labour, excluding from the working class those salaried workers employed in the sphere of circulation of commodities and capital such as commercial or bank workers and large segments of public sector employees, and the problems relating to the actual distinction between new and traditional petty bourgeoisie. I also want to stress that Poulantzas' conception of university education leading automatically to new petty bourgeois positions is untenable today taking

into consideration the contemporary increased access to Higher Education. However, his insistence on the social and not simply ‘technical’ character of the division of labour and the hierarchies within the workplace, on social and political relations within production, and on the role of educational hierarchies, was an important theoretical advance, even if we treat workplace divisions and educational hierarchies as leading to the formation of class fractions and not separate classes.

Thus the fundamental reproduction of social classes does not just involve places in the relations of production. There is no economic self-reproduction of classes over and against an ideological and political reproduction by means of the apparatuses. There is, rather, precisely a process of primary reproduction in and by the class struggle at all stages of the social division of labour. This reproduction of social classes (like their structural determination) also involves the political and ideological relations of the social division of labour; these latter have a decisive role in their relationship to the relations of production. The reason is that the social division of labour itself not only involves political and ideological relations but also the social relations of production within which it has dominance over the 'technical division' of labour. This is a consequence of the fact that within the production process, the production relations are dominant over the labour process (Poulantzas 1975, p. 30).

Poulantzas avoided the traditional criticism of the role of education in class reproduction mainly in terms of access. For Poulantzas the reproduction of the places occupied by class is analytically more important than the reproduction of the particular agents that will occupy these places. The class character of education is evident in the ways it induces the reproduction of the social division of labour, not simply in the raising of barriers to working class students.

It is clear that, even on the absurd assumption that from one day to the next, or even from one generation to the next, the bourgeoisie would all take the places of workers and vice versa, nothing fundamental about capitalism would be changed, since the places of bourgeoisie and proletariat would still be there, and this is the principal aspect of the reproduction of capitalist relations. (Poulantzas 1975, p. 33)

Such a position offered a way to actually criticize the role of Higher Education in social reproduction and especially the reproduction of the division between manual and intellectual labour. This was of particular importance especially in France for various reasons: it reflected the importance of education in the reproduction of class trajectories, especially in societies such as France, but also it was part of a broader critique of capitalist organization of production and its reproduction in Soviet style societies. Under the influence of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and its criticism of the ‘capitalist road’ of the Soviet Union, there was a broad theoretical movement of criticism of the capitalist division of labour, of the division between manual and intellectual labour and consequently of Higher Education as an indispensable apparatus for the reproduction of capitalist relations of production (Gorz (ed.) 1973; Braverman 1974; Bettelheim 1974; Coriat 1976).

Poulantzas relational conception of the State in general and the Ideological Apparatuses of the State, offer a better way to describe how institutions are being fundamentally determined by class struggles and antagonisms. For Poulantzas the state *‘is not an ‘entity’ which [has] an intrinsic instrumental essence, but it is itself a relation, more precisely the condensation of a class relation’* (Poulantzas 1975, p. 26). This relational conception of Poulantzas offered a more dialectical theorization of state power and functioning that Althusser’s more static approach that was based on a theorization of state institutions as apparatuses whose

materiality could be not affected or traversed by struggles and movements, thus leaving little room for transformation through collective action.

1.5. The separation of education from production

However, for Poulantzas, as for Althusser, state apparatuses, including educational apparatuses, are separate from production. For Poulantzas this is a structural aspect of capitalism: “the separation of the school from production is linked with the direct producer's separation from and dispossession of the means of production” (Poulantzas 1975, p. 42). In *State, Power and Socialism* (Poulantzas 1980), his last work, Poulantzas elaborated on this position treating the State and its apparatuses as a form of reproduction of the division between manual and intellectual labour. “*The State incarnates intellectual labour as separated from manual labour*” (Poulantzas 1980, p. 56). The State is for Poulantzas from the start involved in social reproduction and plays a determinant role in class division in society. Poulantzas did not underestimate the economic role of the State. In *Fascism and Dictatorship* he criticized Althusser for not paying enough attention to the economic role of the State (Poulantzas²1979, p. 303) and in *State Power and Socialism* there is a whole chapter dedicated to the expanded role the State has in creating conditions favourable to capitalist accumulation and especially in creating countertendencies to the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, through state educational apparatuses, state support for research and development, various forms of economic planning, technical assistance. For Poulantzas the most crucial aspect of this economic function is the State’s role in the expanded reproduction of labour power (Poulantzas 1980, p. 176), but he still thought about it in terms of a state activity separated from capitalist production. Moreover, although Poulantzas was aware of the rise of

neoliberal ideology (Poulantzas 2008, pp. 377-386), he did not think about it in terms of privatized educational apparatuses, maintaining in this sense the separation of production and reproduction.

1.6 The merits and limits of Althusser's and Poulantzas' theorization of social reproduction

Therefore, we can conclude this section by insisting that both Althusser and Poulantzas offered a critical and dialectical conception of social reproduction. This was based on the importance of class struggle in the formation of social classes, on the primacy of the relations of production over the forces of production, and on the role of education on reproducing the relations of production and the conditions of the social division of labour. Moreover, both Althusser and Poulantzas treated social reproduction not in the sense of an abstract structural determination but more in the sense of the effectiveness of practices and the interventions of ideological state apparatuses (both public and private) within class struggle. This conception offered a possibility to theorize education and especially higher education institutions and their relation to antagonistic class strategies, to explain the importance of radical movements inside education and to challenge technocratic theories of education. However, there were limits in their approach. These had to do with the danger of a possible functionalist reading of the relation between social production and reproduction, and with their centring upon mainly state apparatuses which could not account for the importance of fully privatized and market oriented educational institutions.

2. Education as social production: immaterial labour and the university as a production process.

Although the conception of education as social reproduction was for many years the dominant position in Marxist and / or critical theorizing, since the second half of the 1990s an alternative paradigm has emerged that insists on the directly productive nature of educational apparatuses. Since many of the theorists associated with this conception share a common reference to the tradition of Italian workerism and post-workerism, it is necessary to trace the theoretical shift that led to this position.

2.1 The emergence and evolution of workerism

The theoretical tradition of Italian workerism, or *operaismo*, emerged in the 1960s as an attempt to theorize the role of workers' resistance and struggle for autonomy against capital as the driving force in the changes and mutations of post-WWII capitalism and was from the beginning linked to radical labour militancy, as exemplified in the long wave of labour conflict in Italy, from the 1969 'Hot Autumn' to the late 1970s (*Quaderni Rossi* 1968; Tronti [1971] 2006; Wright 2002).

In the 1970s, from inside the workerist tradition and especially the work of Antonio Negri, a new conception of the social or socialized worker emerged (Negri 1988; Negri 2005). This was based on a certain periodization of capitalist production which in its turn was based on Marx's distinction between formal and real subsumption of labour (Marx – Engels 1994: 93-121). According to Negri, the transition from formal to real subsumption of labour to capital since the 1970s had taken the form of a real subsumption of all aspects of social production and reproduction. Moreover, a new figure of worker emerged, the social or socialized worker which was not based solely in big capitalist firms as the previous figure of the mass worker of the Taylorist factory. The socialized

worker's resistance to exploitation took the form, according to Negri, of the refusal of work and 'self-valorization', described as negation of exploitation through various forms of social and cultural resistance experimentation. "*Worker's self-valorization is not immediate satisfaction [godimento]: it is rather a struggle and unfulfilled tension toward satisfaction*" (Negri 2005, p. 200). Exploitation had to do not simply with unpaid labour time within a particular factory or firm, but with the attempt by capital to impose its command against exactly this socialized worker's tendency towards self-valorization. Although initially reluctant to centre upon university students or university trained technicians – with the exception of work on companies such as Olivetti (Alequati 1985) – workerists in the second half of the 1970s took a new interest in students. Students, unemployed or semi-employed youths etc were considered to be part of this new figure of the social worker. Consequently their struggles, exemplified in student and youth rebellions like the Italian 1977 youth movement which also included not only political demands but also extended forms of cultural experimentation (Berardi 2009, pp. 14-29), can also be part of the broader proletarian insurgency towards self-valorization (Negri 1988).

This went along with a new emphasis on intellectual labour. This was helped by their reading of the 'Fragment on Machines' in the *Grundrisse* (Marx 1973: 690-712) and specifically Marx's reference to the *General Intellect* and its importance in capitalist production. According to Marx, "[t]he development of fixed capital indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a *direct force of production*, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it" (Marx 1973: 706). Negri already in the 1980s insisted

on the communicative and informational character of the labour of the socialized worker: “*Communication is to the socialized worker what the wage relationship was to the mass worker*” (Negri 1989: 118).

2.2. The centrality of intellectual labour in post-workerism

In the evolution of workerism since the 1990s there has been an increased emphasis on intellectual labour or immaterial labour as the hegemonic form of labour, (Hardt and Negri 2005: 109). This led to a conception of radical politics mainly in terms of the grievances and struggles associated with university trained workers and/or students. All the recent literature on the radical potential of the new multitude exemplify this tendency (Hardt and Negri 2000; Virno 2004). Here from the original emphasis on the General Intellect, we move to theorization of science and knowledge as the main productive force. Such a perspective treats struggles and antagonisms regarding the production and reproduction of knowledge as the most crucial in terms of the ontology of contemporary capitalism. From this the next step was to treat the university as one of the most important sites of struggle.

From the image of the social worker, that included students and intellectual workers, the next move was to the centrality of intellectual labour as immaterial labour (Lazzarato 1996; Dyer-Witherford 2005). This was based not only on the importance of real subsumption as ‘command’ over labour time distributed throughout society, but also on the importance of mass intellectuality throughout the capitalist economy, exemplified in the importance of tastes, cultural or aesthetic dimensions of commodities, and in the emphasis on constant innovation. The crucial theoretical move has been the insistence that this form of immaterial labour force is formed outside of production:

My working hypothesis, then, is that the cycle of immaterial labor takes as its starting point a social labor power that is independent and able to organize both its own work and its relations with business entities. Industry does not form or create this new labor power, but simply takes it on board and adapts it. (Lazzarato 1996, p. 137)

This position is the result of a change in terms of ontology. Initially, Negri and the other workerists insisted on class antagonism as constitutive. The initial theoretical conception of the social worker, even in the sense of an antagonism that traversed the whole of society and was mediated by the State, kept this emphasis on class antagonism. However, there was a move towards a different conception of the social worker and immaterial cognitive labour, as a social force or potential in its own. In this reading, the subjectivity of immaterial cognitive labour becomes the centre of a positive ontology of creativity, productivity and the multitude as opposed to the negativity of capitalist command. Negri's gradually increased use of references to a Spinozist conception of *potentia* accentuated this theoretical turn, although, as Alex Callinicos has noted, "the metaphysical abstraction with which such themes are formulated helps to immunize them from critical examination" (Callinicos 2007, p.194). This emphasis on immaterial labour makes the intellectual worker, the worker who is endowed with scientific knowledge, the paradigmatic form of labour and the working class. This is more evident in recent theorizations of what is described as cognitive capitalism.

Actually, the starting point for the formation of cognitive capitalism is the process of diffusion of knowledge generated by the development of mass schooling and the rise of the average level of education. Knowledge is more and more collectively shared. It is this intellectual quality of the labor force which, breaking with industrial capitalism, led to the assertion of a new primacy of living knowledge, mobilized by workers, in contrast to the

knowledge incorporated in fixed capital and the managerial organization of firms. (Vercellone 2009, p.120)

We are dealing here with the inversion of the traditional Marxist conception of the relation between labour and capitalist control. In contrast to the traditional notion of the real subsumption of labour to capital as a process that transforms labour in accordance to the imperatives of capital, here collective living knowledge is presented as being constituted by itself, through the action and mobilization of workers. In such a conception the problem with capitalism is not the pervasive character of its relations of power and social forms, but mainly the neoliberal setting of obstacles to the mobility and creativity of cognitive labour. Although, capitalism draws on the skills, knowledge, experience and culture of labour, presenting labour as a self-constituted creative entity runs the risk of not paying enough attention to the many ways capitalist relations of production also determine labour. Hardt and Negri offer their ontology of immaterial labour in *Empire* (Hardt and Negri 2000). This is based on a conception of social relations within capitalism in terms of capitalist power as command trying to control labour as some sort of vital force, that *per se* pre-exists the antagonistic social relation, since capitalist biopower “is a form of power that regulates social life from its interior, following it, interpreting it, absorbing it, and rearticulating it” (Hardt and Negri 2000, p. 23-24). For Hardt and Negri all forms of immaterial labour, such as informationalized labour in production, immaterial labour in analytical and symbolic tasks and affective labour, are immanently cooperative, creative and emancipatory, by themselves, without the mediation of social relations, contradictions or determinations.

The cooperative aspect of immaterial labor is not imposed or organized from the outside, as it was in previous forms of labor, but rather, *cooperation is completely immanent to the labor activity itself*. This fact calls into question the old notion (common to classical and Marxian political economics) by which labor power is conceived as “variable capital”, that is, a force that is activated and made coherent only by capital. [...] Today productivity, wealth and the creation of social surpluses take the form of cooperative interactivity through linguistic, communicational, and affective networks. (Hardt and Negri 2000: 294)

Paolo Virno (2004) makes this turn even more evident when he insists that in post-fordism there is no distinction between labour time and non-labour time, since both production and non-production are based on the same kind of human potential, associated not with antagonistic social relations but with generic human capacities, themselves inherently emancipatory. “Labor and non-labor develop an identical form of productivity, based on the exercise of generic human faculties: language, memory, sociability, ethical and aesthetic inclinations, the capacity for abstraction and learning.” (Virno 2004, p. 109) It is on the basis of such a conception that Virno insists on post-fordism being the “communism of capital” (Virno 2004, p. 111)). Others like Christian Marazzi have insisted that in contemporary capitalism a great part of value is produced outside capitalist production, inside society (Marazzi 2010). For Gigi Roggero post-fordist capitalism reverses the trend of the objectification of scientific knowledge in dead labour (machines etc.). Instead “the previous process of objectification is now overturned as the worker incorporates many of the aspects of fixed capital” (Roggero 2010, p. 358).

2.3 Education as a production site

This conception of immaterial labour is very important in what concerns the move from thinking about education in terms of reproducing social

classes and relation, to thinking in terms of *producing* labour as a social force. If labour and consequently the class associated with it, is not mainly the result of social relations, practices, and antagonisms within capitalist production, but is more like a creative and intellectual potential emerging through cooperative knowledge process, then education – and especially higher education – actually is the site of *production* of labour or of the *emergence* of labour power as such. Consequently, educational apparatuses, and especially universities, become the production sites *par excellence* of this creative, cooperative and intellectual collective subjectivity that forms the substance of ‘postmodern’ immaterial labour. This is facilitated by the current process of privatization and or corporate or entrepreneurial mutation of Higher Education. In the words of the edu-factory collective: “What was once the factory is now the university” (edu-factory collective 2009: 0). In this conception, the production of knowledge becomes the central process of contemporary capitalism, combining the production and reproduction of actors and subjectivities and turning education and especially Higher Education into the site of the conflict between the capitalist drive to subordinate workers’ desire for autonomy (Roggero 2011).

A more complex conception of the relation between production and reproduction of class in education has been proposed by Jason Read (2003), who combines a reading of both Althusser’s *On Reproduction* and more recent literature on immaterial labour. Read does not deny the importance of reproduction, but he insists on the need to theorize both the tendency to reproduction and the tendency to transformation within capitalism.

Within the capitalist mode of production temporality is constituted in part by the tension between the reproduction of social relations and the

transformations of the forces of production, which is not to suggest that reproduction can be identified with stasis or simple repetition. Reproduction itself changes with the transformation of the technical, social, and political demands of the capitalist mode of production. (Read 2003, p.145)

For Read the important change that has taken place is that social practices associated with reproduction now become directly productive. This brings about a change in the function of the educational apparatus and the “school ceases to be the privileged site of the ideological reproduction of subjectivity (as in Althusser’s essay) and becomes itself the site of both the production of surplus value and the production of subjectivity as fixed capital” (Read 2003, p. 145). For Read this production of subjectivity is a fundamental aspect of capitalism in all of its history, and is inherently antagonistic and contradictory, thus making possible the particular historicity – and history - of capitalism.

The production of subjectivity by capital is always simultaneously exceeding and falling short of the demands of capitalist production. There is always a surplus of power, of communication, that extends beyond the space of production. At the same time, the docility, obedience, and normalization necessary for capitalist production often fails to take hold. If these two senses of the production of subjectivity did coincide, there would be no history of capital. [...] The need to transform, to continually evolve, this is the capitalist mode of production’s particular necessity—particular modality of a becoming necessary—imposed by the singularity of the encounter constitutive of capital. The capitalist mode of production may strive toward “the end of history,” an ideal state in which subjectivity is produced only to occupy its slot within the networks of production and consumption; but this ideal state is a material impossibility (Read 2003, p. 154).

Read provides us with a really interesting attempt to combine the changes in the relations of production with the particular need to constitute a theory of re-production. Reproduction is not repetition, it is the

production of a subjectivity constitutive of capitalism, one that enables the constant re-enactment of practices, but which is not simply the result of reproduction but produced at all levels of social practice.

2.4 The production of class thesis and its implications

We are dealing here with important theoretical contributions to the theorization of the capitalist restructuring of Higher Education.

Theoretically, they avoid the danger of functionalism of theories of class reproduction, since they present class formation as process occurring as a result of class strategies both in production and education. They manage to capture crucial developments and especially the new relations between business and the University and importance of knowledge production in contemporary capitalism. Moreover, they provide valuable insights for critical education theory and radical pedagogy, stressing both the anti-capitalist potential of recent movements in education, but also the possibility to forge alliances between movements inside and outside education.

However, there are certain theoretical and political problems with this approach. The emphasis on knowledge workers runs the risk of underestimating other forms of labour and their role in capitalist production (Caffentzis and Federici 2009). Instead of a theory of capitalist exploitation we have a theory of the subsumption of human creativity and intelligence by the forces of capital. Moreover, there is the danger of treating all developments in Universities simply as a process of transformation towards corporations and losing sight of other developments, such as changes in degree structures, administration, public funding. Although most of the proponents of the immaterial labour thesis insist that they support neither the current configuration of the

contemporary ‘corporate’ or entrepreneurial university nor a statist conception of Higher Education, opting instead for what they describe as a movement of self-education (Roggero 2010; Edu-Factory Collective 2009), in the end they conceive current struggles in terms of public versus private Higher Education. I do not want to underestimate the importance of this opposition, but it can obfuscate other important aspects of contemporary struggles within Higher Education, having to do with the pervasive nature of current neoliberal hegemony, the changes in curricula, and the changes in degree structures.

3. In search of an alternative: entrepreneurial education as hegemonic strategy.

In light of the above it becomes obvious why theoretical questions regarding the production and reproduction of class are important for critical educational theory. Current developments, especially in higher education, pose important theoretical challenges and must be incorporated in any critical theorization of Higher Education. Going back to the class reproduction theories of the 1970s cannot account for recent developments. Simply opting for a theory of cognitive capitalism and the production of immaterial labour in academia, leaves many questions unanswered. In what follows I try to suggest an alternative to the production / reproduction dichotomy through a reading of Gramsci’s conception of *hegemonic apparatuses*.

3.1 From singularity to power

Any alternative theorization must take into consideration recent shifts in the theorizations of social relations and practices. There has been a broader tendency to rethink social ontology in terms of singularity and immanence. Contrary to a conception of social reality as having ‘deep’

structures that govern social phenomena, more emphasis has been placed on the need to avoid such ontological dualisms and insist on practices and structural relations being part of the ontological level. From Pierre Macherey's drawing a line of demarcation from 'structuralism' (Macherey 2006), to the Deleuzian 'plane of immanence' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994), to Foucault's 'nominalist' conception of power (Foucault 1978), to Poulantzas' conception of power as a strategic field of struggles (Poulantzas 1980; Jessop 1990), to Althusser's late thinking on singular encounters (Althusser 2006), the challenge is to think in terms of a dialectics of singularity and immanence, of social forms being reproduced through practices, apparatuses, encounters, *dispositifs*.

Moreover, a broader and more productive conception of social and political power has emerged in contrast to a schematic distinction between exploitation as strictly economic relation and political power as coercion. On the one hand, we have the importance of Foucault's conception of power. Foucault, through the notions of discipline, biopolitics and biopower (Foucault 1977; 1990; 2003; 2008; 2009), did not attempt to simply describe a coercive, 'disciplinary' society; nor did he have in mind some vitalist conception of power as command over the human bios. He tried to deal with the specific modalities of power within capitalism and more specifically the complex and pervasive ways through which social (and consequently political) power increasingly involves all aspects of human life (work, health, 'well-being', everyday life, sexuality, and education) in order to increase productivity of labour.⁹ In my opinion, such a conception of a power, both within social production and social reproduction, offers a new way to think of Althusser's theory of ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses in a more productive way, offering a much more direct causal connection between educational apparatuses

and the necessities of capitalist production than a simple conception of ideology as inscription of social norms would suggest.

In sum, both the new emphasis on singularity and the more productive conception of power, can help us rethink social reproduction not in terms of ‘functions’ or of ‘deep structures’, but of practices, relations, strategies and resistances.

3.2 Hegemony and hegemonic apparatuses

The Gramscian concept of hegemony can offer us a way to theorize education in the context of a more dialectical conception of power. By this I do not refer to the well-known influence of Gramscian notions in critical education theory, regarding the importance of cultural elements, the role of intellectuals, the need to study consent along with coercion. I am referring to what we can gain from more critical and dialectical readings of Gramsci that stress the complexity of his conception of hegemony, the State and hegemonic apparatuses (Buci-Glucksmann 1980; Thomas 2009). Gramsci’s prison writings (Gramsci 1971; Gramsci 1978-96) are not about the importance of culture or consent as a political strategy. They deal with the complex ways through which social power is turned into political power within societies. The complex articulation of civil society (everyday practices and transaction, economic, ‘corporatist’ and other), political society (political and ideological institutions) and the State, offers a more dialectical conception of the relations between economy, society and the State. It is what Gramsci describes as the ‘Integral State’, as “the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules” (Gramsci 1971, p. 244). A class is never simply constituted through

production and then ensures its domination through the State and its reproduction through education. Both its hegemony and its constitution, along with maintaining the subaltern position of the exploited classes, are constantly re-constituted through the apparatuses of the ‘integral state’, not excluding the factory, exemplified in Gramsci’s insistence that in Fordism “hegemony is born in the factory”(Gramsci 1971, p.282). Moreover, Gramsci’s conception of the hegemonic apparatus, which can be public or private, offers a much more complex way to incorporate the different ‘functions’ and practices that we generally describe as education, than the limitation of Althusser’s conception of Ideological State Apparatuses. Specifically it helps us to stress how these apparatuses are conditioned by class strategies and form part of hegemonic and (counter) hegemonic projects, and consequently are the sites of constant struggles. In such a way we can incorporate Poulantzas’ insight about state apparatuses being the condensation of social relations, not as a call ‘to fight within the institutions’ but more like an affirmation of the state’s necessarily antagonistic, contradictory and conflict-ridden character.

In this sense higher educational institutions are indeed ‘state apparatuses’ in the sense described by Althusser: social sites where social force is transformed into power (Althusser 2006, pp.104-110), provided that we think of power as class strategy. But they are not simply ideological apparatuses, at least not in the normal sense of ideology and surely not in the sense that they do not include also economic and political and social imperatives. That’s why they are better described as hegemonic apparatuses. This conception of state apparatuses as “machines transforming social force into power” should not be read as implying a static form. On the contrary, it must be combined with Poulantzas’ insistence on a relational conception of state power, in the sense of

apparatuses being the condensation of relations of power and consequently always transversed by social and political antagonisms.

This relational conception can help us better understand the hegemonic function of state apparatuses. It is not the result of some inherent structural determination, nor of conscious design, but of the articulation of singular practices and strategies. Thus, we can think the question of the new ‘productive’ or entrepreneurial practices within academia, not as the end of the distinction between social production and reproduction, but in terms of strategies that enable the shifts in the forms of social reproduction. It also enables us to think in terms of the articulation of singular practices, decisions, choices into class strategies, without resorting to some conception of ‘structural’ determination as a ‘hidden’ logic of things.

Of course, it is important to insist that class relations are produced primarily ‘outside’ the university although particular emphasis must be placed on the fact that this conception of a logical and causal priority, does not mean some sort of ontological hierarchy. Class is produced and reproduced simultaneously, the result, at the same time, of structural imperatives and singular strategies. The important thing is to insist that antagonistic social relations, embedded immanently within the very form of capitalist production, determine the existence of social classes.

3.3. Production, reproduction and struggle

It is in light of the above that we must rethink the notions of production / reproduction of class. This does not mean that we must abandon any distinction between production and social reproduction in favour of a diffuse social production embracing all aspects of society. But we must rethink the relations and mutual determinations between social production

and reproduction. Instead of a simple distinction between production sites and reproduction sites charged with the task of reproducing the conditions of production, we must think capitalist power and exploitation, in terms of both command and enhanced productivity, as a much more complex set of processes and practices that encompass all of society.

However the question remains open: How can we still think of education in general and of universities in particular as sites of class reproduction? I think that we cannot answer this question simply by referring to reproduction as a “function” of education and as part of some teleology that works “behind the backs” of active social agents. Instead we must see the different class strategies around education, its planning, funding and management and how this determines the role of education in social reproduction. When we refer to class strategies this does not suggest only hegemonic capitalist strategies. We also refer to resistances, counter-strategies, counter-hegemonic projects, both in the ‘narrow’ sense of protests movements and demands within education – the collective action of the student and teaching personnel movements in favour of public education, better wages, better working prospects, better quality of campus life and against privatization, corporate control of research, deterioration of campus life – but also in the broad sense of social and political conflict regarding the position of the collective worker in contemporary capitalist societies, exemplified in the struggles against austerity and precariousness.

Higher education institutions do not produce class relations, nor do they define the practices, antagonisms, conflicting class strategies and class interests that lead to the formation of classes. But surely Higher Education is a terrain of class strategies. I am not referring only to those strategies that we more easily associate with social reproduction, namely

decisions regarding the direction of the expansion of Higher Education, policies about tuition, legislative frameworks regarding the structure of courses and degrees. I am also referring to those strategies within Higher Education, at a more micro level, that have to do with entrepreneurial objectives, market decisions or an ideological preference for market practices, that also in the end, and through their outcomes, tend to be class strategies and lead to the reproduction of the conditions of the dominant capitalist strategy.

Such a perspective can help us study the current capitalist restructuring of Higher Education, the changes in university funding and management, and the changes in degree structures and how they relate to changes in capitalist production and class structure, especially if we take into consideration the current expansion of Higher Education and the tendency for increased access to Higher or Post – Secondary Education. We can no longer think of universities as providing the main class barrier or the main dividing line between the working class and the ‘middle class’ and the bourgeoisie, even though class barriers to access Higher Education continue to exist. Even the division between intellectual and manual labour, if we think of it not in terms of an opposition between those ‘working with their hands’ vs. those ‘working with their brains’ but of the distinction between those who design or manage and those who execute, does not coincide with the question of access to Higher Education, since one finds university degree holders in many posts that are low in the job and decision hierarchy. In contemporary capitalism a large segment of the working class is ‘reproduced’ within universities.

In light of the above, I think that we must focus on the new contradictions arising within capitalist production. Contemporary capitalist production has an increased need for highly qualified technical and scientific

personnel both in manufacturing but also in the service sector and finance, exemplified in the importance of informational technology, new innovatory production process, increased reliance on data processing, new communication markets, and biosciences. If we describe these processes as if capitalists make plans and then demand that the educational sector produce the necessary personnel, then we are dangerously simplifying. On the other hand, it would be equally oversimplifying to say that we have the ‘multitude’ or some ‘new cognitive proletariat’, that has by itself, through some sort of intrinsic collective creative ability the necessary educational and cultural capital, and which is then violently subsumed by capital.

We need a more dialectical way to think of these processes and their consequences for Higher Education. What we have is the emergence of new forms of productive processes (and new areas for the accumulation and valorisation of capital), that require the application of scientific knowledge, new technologies and consequently the employment of a workforce with increased skills education. These skills do not ‘pre-exist’ the productive processes they are applied to, even though they demand a theoretical and technical formation that cannot be achieved on the spot: they emerge at the intersection between production, education and research. In this sense, new forms of production ‘induce’ the need for new educational practices, curricula, even degree structures, a process obviously facilitated by the new linkages between production, finance and academia. At the same time, the entrepreneurial shift in education leads to universities being oriented towards technological and organizational interventions, and consequently skills, degrees, study modules, that have a potential to be relevant to actual or potential

productive processes. One could study the emergence of separate bioengineering courses and degrees as an example of such an interaction.

Moreover, the new forms of academic management and planning that insist on openness to markets also facilitate this interaction between the world of production and education. The result is that the needs of industry are more easily internalized within academic decision processes. This is evident in the ways the question of demand is discussed, especially in universities that rely on tuition. ‘Demand’ is not only a symptom of an increased commodification of Higher Education (as opposed to education serving knowledge and the common good); it is also one of the ways that tendencies in the labour market and capitalist economy in general are internalized within academic planning processes.

In this sense, certain choices within Universities, even if they are motivated by more ‘short sighted’ attempts to gain some niche of the educational market, or to compete for research funding, along with more strategic conceptions of educational planning - as expressed in general directions for European Union or State funding, in government ‘white papers’ and in deliberations about the allocation of resources – all these lead to Higher Education functioning indeed as a *hegemonic apparatus*. Higher Education as hegemonic apparatus helps the reproduction of class structures and the articulation of dominant class strategies, enhances capitalist accumulation and undermines the resistances of the subaltern classes. At the same time, movements and conflicts within Higher Education, as manifestations not only of specific student grievances but also of broader social demands and aspirations, also determine counter-hegemonic strategies in the evolution of Higher Education. Student movements, social movements and campaigns emerging in Higher Education (such as the anti-sweatshops campaigns), broad social and

political movements with a strong base inside Higher education (from the anti-globalization movement to current forms of radicalism), all these have also been instrumental in the evolution of Higher Education, even in the sense of placing obstacles to its complete entrepreneurialisation.

The shift towards a more entrepreneurial higher Education is not limited to questions about degree structures, access and hierarchies, but also to the ideological and political balance of forces both within and outside academia. The emergence of an entrepreneurial higher education has been instrumental in answering a crucial challenge in contemporary capitalist society, namely the need to have a collective labour force that is at the same time more qualified, including the need for a larger segment having a higher education degree, but with less collective rights and aspirations – including its perception of a ‘fair wage’ – and more easily adjustable to a more oppressive, insecure, precarious and exploitative environment, to low pay and large intervals of unemployment. Apart from the changes in curricula, of particular importance is the change in the nature of the degree. The turn from ‘strong’ and broad degrees, covering a variety of potential forms of employment and corresponding to well defined positions in labour process hierarchies, to highly fragmented and individualized forms of ‘qualifications portfolios’ in permanent need of enrichment through life-long learning practices. Institutional changes such as the ‘diploma supplement’ introduced in European countries as part of the Bologna Process reforms, attest to the extent of these changes.

At the same time we see the recurring tendency of exactly these segments of the global workforce, in various struggles, from the student movements of the 2000s, to struggles against austerity, to the Indignados or Occupy movements, to insist on rights and justice, to struggle in order to have their increased expertise being translated into better employment

conditions, salaries, and prospects, to resist the various forms of formal and real subsumption of their labour to the imperatives of capital, and to be much more aware of the potential for a non-exploitative form of cooperative production (traces of it already evident in the emergence of “new commons” such as open source software). The importance of this generation of well-educated and highly-trained young people in the global eruption of protest, contestation and even insurgency in the past years, offers ample evidence of this tendency, not only in advanced capitalist societies. The mass participation of college graduates in the ‘Occupy movement’ epitomizes this, but also the presence of educated youths in the Arab Spring (Solomon and Palmieri (eds.) 2011).

4. Conclusion

In a period of intense conflict and struggle regarding the future of education, theoretical debates on social production and reproduction are more than necessary and should not be considered a luxury. Marxist theories of class reproduction, especially those associated with the work of theorists like Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas, provided invaluable insight into the role of education in the reproduction of social classes and challenged dominant technocratic conceptions of the neutral or purely ‘technical’ character of educational policy. Recent theoretical works coming from the workerist or post-workerist theoretical tradition have enabled us to better understand the dynamics of the shift towards corporate and entrepreneurial higher education, but their ontology of cognitive labour falls short of providing an alternative to the dangers of a functionalist and teleological conception of educational apparatus. In contrast, by combining the emphasis on singularity and practice in recent radical social theory, with a more ‘productive’ conception of social power, along with a return to Gramsci’s concepts of hegemony, integral

state, hegemonic apparatus, as a strategic-relational theory of power, we can arrive at a better understanding of today's transformation of higher education as the result of capitalist class strategies, but also at an awareness of the potential for resistance and change.

Therefore, entrepreneurial Higher Education is both a class strategy aiming at ensuring conditions for the reproduction of the conditions of capitalist accumulation (steady flow of qualified personnel, applicable scientific knowledge, product development) and a hegemonic project aiming at undermining the aspirations of the subaltern classes (as attempt towards inscribing precariousness in the form and hierarchy of degrees, reproducing neoliberal ideology, fragmenting collective aspirations and practices). It not only extends knowledge and skills but promotes the identities, habits and illusions of a particular kind of worker within neoliberal capitalism. Entrepreneurial Higher Education involves not only the transformation of university governance into more managerialist modes and structures but also a particular culture of knowledge, a particular view of knowledge acquisition and utilisation. It attempts to pre-emptively make sure that the expansion of higher education does not alter the balance of forces in the workplace and to guarantee capitalist hegemony in production. Consequently, the core contradictions in contemporary advanced capitalist societies are internalized to Higher Education. This is, of course, a particular manifestation of a broader social and political tendency, and higher education reforms form part of a broader capitalist hegemonic strategy that includes the production of new learner identities in schools, accountability frameworks for teachers, and new worker identities within new kinds of work-place disciplinary structures.

All these give to current struggles around Higher Education a strategic depth and importance, makes them part of a greater social mobilization against processes of capitalist restructuring and helps them connect more easily with other social movements. These struggles will not only determine the direction of Higher Education policy, but also the political and ideological practices and subjectivities (both individual and collective) of large segments of the global workforce, thus affecting the balance of forces between capital and labour.

Notes

¹ The writer wishes to thank Terry Wrigley, Spyros Themelis and the anonymous referees of JCEPS for their comments and suggestions.

² The essay first appeared in *La Pensée* in 1970 and in English appeared in Althusser 1971.

³ The coincidence in the title with Bourdieu's and Passeron's book (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, the French original appeared in 1970) is evidence of the importance these questions had acquired in critical social thinking in the 1960s. However, Althusser's manuscript is broader in scope.

⁴ "[T]he productive forces of society change and develop, and then, *depending* on these changes and *in conformity with them*, men's relations of production, their economic relations, change" (Stalin 1976: 859).

⁵ "In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord, the steam-mill society with the industrial capitalist" (Marx 1984 [1847, p. 166).

⁶ "Without doubt we can characterize the politics of Stalin (in the sense that beginning with the '30-'32 "turn", he was the only to decide it in the last resort) by saying that *it was the consistent politics of the Primacy of the Forces of production over the relations of production*. It would be interesting to examine, under this relation, at the same time the planification politics of Stalin, his peasant politics, the role he played in the Party, and even some stupefying phrases such the one that by qualifying "man as the most precious *capital*", obviously treats man only under the relation of the labour force, that is as a pure and simple element of the production forces (whatever we think about the theme of stakhanovism that is linked to this). (Althusser 1995, p. 249).

⁷ On the importance of the foucauldian notion of *dispositif* as a way to describe the complex, contradictory and dynamic nature of social apparatuses see Deleuze 1992. On Foucault's conception of "technology of power" see Foucault 1977.

⁸ Althusser's emphasis on the centrality of class struggles within Ideological State Apparatuses is a point that has often been neglected in criticisms of Althusser. For

such an example of a misguided presentation of Althusser's theory as excluding the possibility of resistances see Giroux 1982.

⁹ For a recent reading of both Foucault and Marx that brings forward this 'productive' conception of power see Macherey 2012. (I would like thank Jason Read for bringing this text to my attention).

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