

Education and the Politics of Human Resistance

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Introduction

The title and topic for this article derive from the subtitle to an edited collection I produced with Dave Hill, Peter McLaren and Mike Cole in 1999: *Postmodernism in Educational Theory: Education and the Politics of Human Resistance* (Hill *et al*, 1999). For me, the subtitle was not explained or explored adequately in the book, though there is some material on it in Rikowski (1999) and in Neary (1999). In this article, I aim to expand on what I mean by a 'politics of human resistance' and, flowing from this discussion, to indicate the central role that education plays in struggles for progressive social change.

However, in terms of presenting the argument, I start from the opposite end: that is, with the importance of Marxist analysis in terms of locating weak links in the rule of capital, and then demonstrating *via* a discussion on capital's weakest link – labour power – the significance of education for a politics of human resistance. Finally, the article looks at what a politics of human resistance might mean for education for progressive social change.

Marxism and the Weakest Link

The work of John Holloway (1993, 1994, 1995, and 2005) indicates vividly why Marxism has relevance for igniting radical social change today, and also why it has resonance for understanding the significance of education for progressive social change. It is Holloway's insistence that Marxism is not primarily a theory *of* society but a theory *against* society (in Holloway, 1994, pp.38-39) that begins to open up vistas of education as anti-capitalist activity. Of course, a theory *against* society presupposes some understanding and knowledge *of* society, notes Holloway (1995, p.156). In the same way, to generate an anti-capitalist education, a form of education *against* capitalist education, knowledge of the history and development of education systems and processes is essential. These points require elaboration.

For Holloway, Marxism articulates theoretically our anger; our scream of refusal to tolerate contemporary capitalist society and its allied human condition: its wars, multiple inequalities, and its

infinite social drives that disfigure working life and social relationships. This anger, this refusal is the starting point for critical analysis of capitalist society, and once lost sight of the point of a critical social theory such as Marxism becomes brittle, and ultimately breaks off. Thus, the starting point is the scream:

In the beginning was the scream. When we talk or write, it is all too easy to forget that the beginning was not the word, but the scream. Faced with the destruction of human lives by capitalism, a scream of sadness, a scream of horror, above all a scream of anger, of refusal: NO. The starting point of theoretical reflection is opposition, negativity, struggle. The role of theory is to elaborate that scream, to express its strength and to contribute to its power, to show how the scream resonates through society and to contribute to that resonance (Holloway, 2005, p.15).

According to Holloway, this is the 'origin of Marxism', or at least why we should be interested in Marxism: a theory that amplifies the scream and shoots its sound into all known areas of capitalist social life. However, Marxism is not the only theory that purports to be against society. There are other candidates. So why is Marxism best able to articulate the scream?

Holloway acknowledges that Feminism, Anarchism, Green theory and theories that develop anti-racism are significant (1994, p.39) in terms of providing oppositionist theoretical resources. Furthermore, he also indicates that these theories and other critical theories articulate various aspects of capitalist oppression: racism, sexism, the degradation of the environment, curtailments of various freedoms and so on – and they have developed substantial insights into these issues of life in capitalist society. Holloway also accepts that Marxism has not always addressed adequately Green issues, sexism, personal and social freedoms and so on – though I believe this point can be pressed too far, as Mike Cole argues in the case of 'race', where Marxists have made significant contributions (see Cole, forthcoming 2007). However, argues Holloway, there is a crucial difference between Marxism and other theories of radical change such as Feminism and Green theory: Marxism takes *negativity* much further:

It interprets the whole of society in terms of the force which negates this society, the power of labour. That is what makes it so powerful as a theory of revolutionary change. For Marxism the 'them' who dominate are not external to 'us' who are dominated. Capital is nothing other than alienated labour. The scream of Marxism is a promethean scream: we are everything, there are no gods, no superhuman forces. People are the sole creators, it is labour alone which constitutes social reality (Holloway, 1993, p.19).

Furthermore, while other radical theories are theories of social domination or oppression:

... Marxism takes that oppression as its starting point. The question of Marxism is not: 'how do we understand social oppression?', but: 'given

that we live in an oppressive society, how can we understand the *fragility* of that oppression?' (Holloway, 1994, p.39 – my emphasis).

Thus: for Marxism, 'the whole analysis of capitalism is developed through the perspective of its fragility' (ibid.). What sets Marxism apart from other radical theories such as Feminism is 'the *total* character of its negation' of capitalist society (Holloway, 1995, p.159 – my emphasis). The social validity of Marxism as a theory against society rests on its capacity to locate the fragility of capitalist social domination; to locate the weak points in the rule of capital. In pursuing and realising the fragility of capitalist social domination, in locating the weak points in capital's empire, the scream of refusal turns into the scream of power as we come to realise that:

We are the only reality, the only power. There is nothing but us, nothing but our negativity. That is why the scream of refusal is a scream of power (Holloway, 1995, p.159).

Additionally:

It is through understanding that 'they' are *not* external to us, that capital is *not* external to labour, that we can understand the vulnerability of capitalist domination. To move beyond the externality of 'them-against-us' is at the same time to go beyond a radical theory of oppression to the concern of Marxism: the *fragility* of oppression (Holloway, 1995, p.159 – original emphases).

The constitution of our 'selves' as capital and labour incorporates not only tensions within capital itself but the contradictions between capital and labour. We are divided against ourselves, argues Holloway (1994, p.41). Marxism is not just a theory of capitalist oppression, but it is also a theory that articulates the contradictions of that oppression, notes Holloway, and:

This gives Marxism a special relevance for any person or movement interested in a radical transformation of society (1994, p.40).

It is by analysing the contradictions of capitalist oppression that weak points in capital's existence can be located, and then these can become the point of focus, critique and political action. In its project of pinpointing fragilities in capitalist oppression Marxism facilitates the formation of political strategies of maximum effect. It is in this that its anti-capitalist validity ultimately resides.

But how does all of this relate to *education* for progressive social change? A couple of points of elaboration will suffice here before moving on to answer this question in the rest of this article.

First, the point about Marxism's capacity for dissolving all in negativity is important. New Labour's education policy since the mid-1990s has focused on a number of theories and projects for social change that suggest *positivity*. All the twists and turns of New Labour education strategy since 1993 have involved projecting positive visions and outlooks. As I noted in 2000, in terms of ideas

guiding Tony Blair's varied visions for a New Britain (which each have consequences for education, some more obvious and direct than others):

Intellectually, Blair has been promiscuous. Over the last seven or eight years he has expressed interest in: the learning society (Labour Party, 1994); Etzioni's communitarianism (1993); Hutton's concept of stakeholder capitalism (1995); the writings of the *Demos* think tank; Giddens' concept of the Third Way (1998); and, most recently, Leadbeater's Knowledge Economy (1999). It may be that Blair's thinking is moving away from the nebulous 'third way' towards developing something more tangible on the back of the knowledge economy (Rikowski, 2000a, p.4).

It would be possible to take each of these frameworks for a New Britain in turn and work out their consequences for education policy and indicate their essential positivity. However, let us take the most glaringly relevant of these ideas in terms of its consequences for education: the Learning Society. Defining the learning society is not easy, as Ranson (1998) and Rikowski (1998) make clear. There are various visions and models of, and perspectives on, the Learning Society (see Rikowski, 1998, pp.215-219). Ranson (1998, pp.4-10) summarises the Learning Society as:

- A society which needs to change the way it learns (bringing in lifelong learning, informal learning, and making formal education more relevant)
- A society in which all its members are learning
- A society which learns to democratically change the conditions of learning.

Yet this is still an abstract conception, unrelated to the form and nature of the society in which we currently find ourselves: capitalist society. When the Learning Society is viewed in relation to really existing capitalist society then the problems begin, and it melds into a capitalist social form where learning becomes subservient to commodity production, value-creation and ultimately profit-making, with the requisite education policies to validate and develop these outcomes (see Rikowski, 1998 and 2004b). The key point is that in a Learning Society lodged within capitalism, learning is constituted as being related to economic competitiveness in a globalising world (see Rikowski, 2001). Thus, what starts out as something positive, a Learning Society where the quality and quantity of learning are key, degenerates into negativity: learning is cast under the shadow of value-creation within contemporary capitalist society. Marxism show how this process operates; how something that appears to be as good as Mother's apple pie can turn into yet another tentacle that binds our souls to capital. Education for social change should include uncovering how apparent positives (e.g. social inclusion, lifelong learning, higher education 'standards', or creativity in

education), when set in the context of capital's social universe, become negatives. Positivity dissolves into negativity.

Secondly, this indicates the significance of relentless critique of education policies and practices. Education for social change begins with the critique of existing education systems, policies, practises and phenomena. This critique implies not just a critique of capitalist education but simultaneously capitalist society. It further implies a:

... critique of all forms of inequality in capitalist society – class inequality, sexism, racism, discrimination against gay and lesbian people, ageism and differential treatment of other social groups – and how all of these forms of inequality link to capital accumulation and value production (Rikowski, 2004a, p.567).

What is required ultimately is a critique of all known capitalist social life (Rikowski, 2004, p.568). However, this is only the first moment of education for progressive social change, the other two being meeting human needs and opening up realms of freedom (see Rikowski, 2004, pp.568-569), and these three moments can be related productively (p.570). But to show these relationships is beyond the scope of this article, and all I would argue here is the more limited point: critique is crucial for education for progressive social change.

Finally, returning directly to Holloway's project for Marxism, to use it to uncover the contradictions, tensions and weak links within the dominion of capital, education for progressive social change is crucial. This is due to the fact that in capitalist society education is involved in the social production of the single, unique and most special commodity within the realm of capital: labour power. Labour power is the capacity to labour, which is sold in the labour market. Today, this sale is obscured to some extent by a complex canopy of labour contracts, recruitment practices, labour relations and the various laws regulating these areas. Once sold to capital for a wage, the managers of capital seek to ensure that the labour power is used productively in the actual labour process: i.e. to produce value and surplus-value (value over and above that represented by the wage) and profits (surplus-value minus the expenses of production). Labour power must be transformed into labour in the capitalist labour process to the extent that surplus-value and profits are attained. Thus, labour power is that precious commodity which produces value and surplus-value on which the expansion of capital depends. Furthermore, labour power is like no other commodity in capital's social universe: it is incorporated within labourers themselves. It is part of their personhoods, like no other commodity. It is under the sway of potentially hostile wills. It is owned by the labourers; it is their commodity. Thus, not only is labour power the supreme commodity it is also one that capital can never completely own in terms of the personhood of the labourer (for if it did then that would constitute slave society) and therefore

ever have sufficient control over. As the supreme commodity, labour power is an enigma, a nightmare for capital yet simultaneously the source of the very constitution and existence of capital. Together, this explosive concoction makes labour power capital's *weakest link*. The following two sections expand on this point through the work of Karl Marx.

The Fuel that Generates the Life We Know: Labour Power

The whole system of capitalist production is based on the fact that the workman sells his labour-power as a commodity (Karl Marx, *Capital – volume 1*, 1867a, p.405).

Karl Marx opens his *magnum opus*, the first volume of *Capital*, with the statement that:

The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as “an immense accumulation of commodities,” its unit being a single commodity. Our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of a commodity (Marx, 1867a, p.43).

Thus, Marx started his analysis and critique of capital not with capital itself, but with the commodity. He had realised that the commodity was the perfect beginning for the analysis of capital and the critique of political economy several years earlier in his notes on the *Grundrisse* (Marx, 1858). Only in Notebook VII, after over eight hundred pages of the 1973 edition of the *Grundrisse* does Marx announce that: ‘This section to be brought forward’ (in Marx, 1858, p.881). Marx started with the commodity as it was the ‘economic cell form’ of capitalist society (1867b, p.19). The unfolding of the structuring features incorporated within the commodity form in capitalist society – value, use-value, and exchange-value posited on the basis of abstract labour as measured by labour-time – allowed Marx to simultaneously uncover key aspects of the constitution and nature of capital. Marx saw the commodity as the condensed ‘general form of the product’ in capitalist society, according to Moishe Postone (1996, p.148). The commodity was the ‘most elementary form of bourgeois wealth’ (Marx, 1863, p.173). Thus, the commodity was the perfect starting point for Marx’s analysis of capital and the critique of political economy.

However, what is less well known is that in the first volume of *Theories of Surplus Value*, Marx makes a crucial distinction between the general class of commodities and the commodity that is in a class of its own: labour power. Marx notes that:

The whole world of “commodities” can be divided into two great parts. First, labour power; second, commodities as distinct from labour power itself (Marx, 1863, p.167).

This point is reiterated (in Marx, 1863, p.171). Thus: labour power is in a class of its own, and later we shall see why this is so. In *Capital*, at least for the first two volumes, Marx did not pay much attention to the social production of labour power. Rather, he assumed that labour power was 'always on hand' (Marx, 1878, p.577) and its social production did not therefore need particular explanation. Furthermore, Marx appeared to be mainly interested in labour power in the first two volumes of *Capital* in terms of how the value of labour power itself was determined which had consequences for the rate of surplus-value extraction. Empirically, the social production of labour power was a very weak and under-developed process when Marx was writing *Capital* – especially in England, where a national system of education figuring as an effective productive force in relation to labour power was slow in developing compared to many other European countries. Only in the third volume of *Capital* (Marx, 1865) does Marx venture to say something explicit on labour power's social production in terms of how education contributes towards this, as we shall see in the next section.

So, what is labour power? For Marx, labour power is:

... the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description (1867a, p.164).

Thus, on this characterisation, labour power has real social existence only when it is transformed into actual labour (when producing use-values) in the labour process. The point about the labourer 'exercising' her mental and physical capabilities is also important, as it refers to acts of will on the part of the labourer in organising their own skills and capabilities in the service of capital in the production of commodities as use-values (which also contain value). As I have argued elsewhere (Rikowski, 1990) what is to be included in 'mental capabilities' is contentious, and on the basis of empirical research on recruitment in the engineering industry (Ibid.) I would include work and social attitudes and personality traits as examples of 'mental capabilities' incorporated within labour power. The typical focus on skills, physical abilities and knowledge posits an impoverished version of human capital that does not even make sense empirically in terms of what employers demand in the recruitment process (Ibid.). This focus of attitudes (especially work attitudes) and personality traits reflects the fact that:

In general, labour power – the capacity to labour does not simply mean the *ability* to perform physical or mental work. It means in addition, the willingness to do so under another's control, regardless of whether this control is direct or indirect, and whether it is exercised by a private capital or by social capital (Harvie, 2006, p.6).

The subsumption of the *will* of the worker under capital to a certain extent, not just their capabilities and capacities, is crucial.

The crucial point is that labour power is the special commodity that generates value, which is the substance of the social universe of capital (Neary and Rikowski, 2000), and hence of capital itself as capital arises, is birthed on the creating of surplus-value – its first social form. As Marx noted, labour power is a ‘presupposition of capital’ (1858, p.320). Unfortunately for capital, the capitalists and their management helpers, labour power resides within the personhoods, and under the command of the labourers. Labourers fundamentally own their labour powers. It is merely sold to capital for a period of time (the working day, week, year etc.). Representatives of capital have to coax this precious power out of labourers to the maximum in order to compete effectively with others capitals. Labour power, as the aggregation of those mental and physical capabilities existing within labourers and which they put into motion and exercise when they create use values is a *unified* force within humans. It is something that flows throughout the whole person, and its attributes – the itemised skills, knowledges and so on used concretely in production – are organised by the labourer and developed and enhanced within them. Thus, in selling herself to the capitalist the labourers sells her abilities and talents (Marx, 1878, p.285).

The specific use-value of which labour power has for capital is that it creates more value than that represented by the wage (Marx, 1865 and 1867a). It is the only commodity in the social universe of capital that can create, sustain and expand capital through surplus-value production. This establishes its supreme importance in the firmament of commodities. In addition, this magical commodity resides in the personhoods of labourers, and is ultimately under the jurisdiction of their wills. Thus: labour power is the supreme value-creating power on which capital depends for its existence, and it is incorporated within labourers who have the potential to withhold this wonderful social force (through strikes or leaving the employment of a capital) or worse, to use labour power for anti-capitalist activity and ultimately for non-capitalist forms of production. Together, these features make labour power capital’s *weakest link*. Capital depends on it, yet it has the capacity to be used by its owners against capital and to open up productive forms which capital no longer dominates. Marx and Marxist analysis uncovers this with a greater force and clarity as compared with any other critical social theory. In indicating the fragility of capital in this way, and in pinpointing its weakest link, Marxist analysis is vindicated and justified.

But where does education come into the picture? The following section explores this question.

Education and Labour Power

... education produces labour power (Karl Marx, 1863, p.210).

Those who are engaged with training productive workers are involved with changing the special commodity labour power itself (David Yaffe, 1976, p.12).

In capitalist society, there is pressure to raise the quality of labour power. The general social drive to enhance the quality of human labour power in capitalism is founded on the fact that, everything else being equal, a rise in the quality of labour power leads to a re-division of the working day into necessary labour (as reflected in value represented by the wage) and surplus-labour (as reflected in unpaid labour that produces the surplus-value from which profits derive) in favour of the latter. This is because enhanced labour power quality increases production speeds and quality, harnesses workers to the cause of innovation and makes life easier for managements (and hence cuts managements costs) in a myriad of ways. This general, abstract but real social drive is experienced by individual capitals and the human representatives of capital (capitalists and managers) *concretely* in terms of raising productivity, quality improvement and hence sales and profits. Voluntarism, leaving the enhancement of labour power quality to employers themselves, has a strong tradition in the UK. Yet from the late nineteenth century the state made inroads into providing employment training for youth and also to attempt to ensure that schools provided employers with young people in possession of the kinds of labour power attributes they said they wanted – even though they were unclear or confused about what these attributes were (Rikowski, 2000b).

The pace of state involvement in labour power production and quality enhancement stepped up after the Second World War, especially in England. The 1944 Education Act and the Employment and Training Act of 1948 (see Neary, 1999) provided the legislative framework for a definite system of what I have called the *social production of labour power* through education and training (Rikowski, 1990). The social production of labour power is:

... the conglomeration of the social processes involved in producing the 'unique' or 'thinking' commodity ... Listing institutional form involved in labour-power production we have: schooling; on/off-the-job-training; further and higher education; character and attitude training; the development of abilities in the labour process – as *some* of the elements. Empirical and historical research and analysis is necessary to ascertain the productive forms for particular categories of labour (Rikowski, 1999, pp.75-76).

Thus, in contemporary capitalist society, education and training play increasingly vital roles in producing and developing labour power. Indeed, as I have argued (in Rikowski, 2004b) there is a kind of practical reductionism involved where education and training

policies are being increasingly framed within and justified with reference to human capital (read labour power) production. Wider notions of education unrelated to work preparation are being undermined, denigrated and downgraded – sometimes even by UK Education Ministers: e.g. Charles Clarke's comments about subjects such as ancient history being 'dodgy' in terms of their vocational relevance.

A few years ago, I demonstrated how lifelong learning policy in England is driven by labour power enhancement (see Rikowski, 2004b). Only last week the Confederation of British Industry was castigating the work-readiness of school leavers for the challenges posed by capitalist work. This latest employers' critique of the labour power of youth in the UK was based on research undertaken amongst 140 firms, and was sponsored by the Department for Education and Skills (CBI, 2006a). The resulting Report, *Working on the Three R: Employers' Priorities for Functional Skills in Maths and English* focused on the perceived inadequate maths and English skills of the nation's school leavers. Thus, after James Callaghan's Ruskin College Speech of 1976, the resulting Great Debate on Education, the 1988 Education Reform Act (ushering in the National Curriculum, national testing, SATs, league tables, and then Ofsted), together with New Labour's focus on standards early on after 1997 and then the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Hours – school-leavers' reading, writing and maths are *still* inadequate for employers! The CBI Report (2006a) could have easily have been written in the 1970s or 1980s – though employer criticism of school-leavers declined for a while after the 1988 Education Reform Act.

For the CBI, the stakes are high. As Richard Lambert noted in the *Foreword to Working on the Three Rs*:

As international competition intensifies, it is more important than ever that the UK workforce should not continue to lag behind in terms of basic skills in reading, writing, communicating and making practical use of maths (Lambert, 2006).

Thus: for Lambert, schools are failing to provide the young employees the nation needs to compete in the international economic arena. A CBI press release noted that one in three employers surveyed were sending staff for remedial maths and English tuition (CBI, 2006b, p.1). Last Thursday, when the GCSE results came out the CBI congratulated the students but also "warned that too many were still not achieving the minimum standards in maths and English" (CBI, 2006c, p.1).

The press picked the story up with relish. AOL Lifestyle (2006) framed the story in terms of 'grunting' teenagers unable to communicate effectively. Alexandra Frean (2006) from *The Times*

focused on data from the case studies provided by the Report: e.g. trainee caterers not knowing how to divide a pie into eight equal parts. Rebecca Smithers (2006) in *The Guardian* noted that the CBI wanted more transparency on new modules on “functional skills” (to be piloted from September) in terms of the percentage marks on these (to be introduced in 2008) to be handed over to employers. David Willetts, Conservative Shadow Education Secretary, bemoaned the degree of GCSE coursework. The Schools Minister, Jim Knight went along with the CBI critique, noting apologetically that:

Every single young person must have a good grasp of the basics. We have done more than any government to make this a reality. We are changing the way we measure performance in these basic skills and toughening up the English and maths GCSEs to ensure that young people master the three Rs. In the future employers will have a guarantee of the quality of the school leavers they are taking on (in Smithers, 2006).

What was interesting about Jon Boone’s (2006) report in the *Financial Times* was that he emphasised another employers’ survey undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and KPMG which threw up data indicating employers were more interested in ‘soft skills’; e.g. work attitudes and personality traits – which typically come out as most significant in research on employers’ needs regarding youth labour (see Rikowski, 2000). Hence, the employers in this report “challenged” the findings of the CBI (2006a) Report, noted Boone.

It should be noted that employers have long been dissatisfied with the quality of school-leavers. In the British context, analysis of management journals illustrates employer dissatisfaction with school-leavers and young people going back at least to the First World War. In the early 1980s, I examined the journals of the Industrial Society and the Institute of Personnel Management (which went through various name changes) going back to the 1920s. In both of these journals there was a ‘long moan of history’ from employers (Rikowski, 2000, p.25) regarding the quality of youth as workers. Yet given that the social drive to enhance the quality of labour power is infinite, employers will never, and can never be satisfied with the labour power quality of school-leavers and young workers. The Long Moan of History is set to continue into the future, unto the death of capitalist society.

Education and the Politics of Human Resistance

What has been established so far through Marxist analysis and critique is that labour power is capital’s weakest link and that capitalist education and training are involved in the social production of labour power, and that this involves the reduction of

education and training to labour power production. Thus, if we are serious about using Marxian explorations to uncover the fragility of capital, and in so doing happen to locate capital's weakest link, then we need to follow this through with the requisite and corresponding critique, activism, protests and other forms of political action, and the search for alternatives. Concretely, in practice, what is required, in the first instance, is a *politics of human resistance*.

This politics of human resistance does not really exist in any explicit form today. At its heart is opposition (human resistance) to the reduction of education and training to labour power production. This entails a relentless focus on this form of resistance as the most significant anti-capitalist strategy. It has the potential to be the most effective anti-capitalist strategy as it drives at capital's *weakest link*: labour power. On this analysis, existing Left groups and parties tend to merely react to events (wars, atrocities, government and ministerial corruption, atrocious business behaviour and so on), bolster opportunism and seek to "engage the masses" on the politically hot but adventitious topic of the day. Thus: they tend to act in an unprincipled manner through ignoring the *raison d'être* of Marxism: i.e. providing the analytic tools to locate capital's fragility, and especially its weakest link – and then use these insights to keep hammering away at this particular weakness as a priority. A philosophy of revolution – which, for me, is what using Marxism as I have used it amounts to – informs strategy, and this infuses modes of activism and action. The *absolute negativity* that this process entails informs organisational forms and action, with the dialectic of organisation and philosophy always kept in view, for:

Today's objective-subjective situation provides ample proof of how the effort to work out a new beginning cannot be realized when the concretisation of the philosophy of revolution is skipped over (News & Letters, 2006, p.8).

Of course, some critics at this point are likely to come over all indignant and point to Lebanon, Iraq and so on and accuse me of ignoring these events as instances on which anti-capitalist politics can be built. However, my point above is that the politics of human resistance is the main *priority*, not that all other issues are systematically ignored. There is a strategic point to anti-capitalist activity, and we should not just be blown about by the winds of events – a fear of Harold Macmillan's, apparently, when he was UK Prime Minister. Furthermore, other issues are significant in terms of how they relate to the politics of human resistance: the links need to be made, in all senses.

Secondly, the politics of human resistance is not only concerned with opposing the reduction of education and training to labour power but also holds out for modes of education and training aimed

at meeting human needs and opening up realms of freedom (see Rikowski, 2004a). At this point, the politics of human resistance also needs to intersect with a more generalised anti-capitalist education otherwise it embraces only one dimension of the negativity required for progressive social change: i.e. resistance to the reduction of education and training to labour power production – without offering alternative forms of education and training.

Thirdly, a politics of human resistance has a truly pedagogic aspect: it must incorporate a critical pedagogy, or what Peter McLaren (in Pozo and McLaren, 2006, p.19) calls 'revolutionary critical pedagogy' – given that mainstream critical pedagogy is often quite tame and domesticated in terms of its orientation. Thus, education as labour power production for capitalist work should be challenged in classrooms and staffrooms – a tough call today as vocationalist consciousness seems to have become more entrenched. However, one of the problems with this is that in any society, including the society of the future, labour power will and must exist. Therefore, it would be unwise to attack the very existence of labour power, as a few on the Left have done. Education and trained labour power will be essential, always. Rather the *social form* that it takes must be challenged – in particular, in contemporary capitalist society, the reduction of labour power to human capital: the social form that labour power assumes in currently constituted society (see Rikowski, 1999).

Conclusion: Critical Pedagogy Plus

A true renewal of thinking about educational and social reform must pass through a regeneration of Marxist theory if the great and fertile meaning of human rights and equality is to reverberate in the hopes of aggrieved populations throughout the world. Education in its current incarnation is bound up with the fate of corporate-led global capitalism and its unbridled capacity for accumulation (Peter McLaren, *An Address to La Fundación McLaren de Pedagogía Crítica*, Tijuana, Mexico, 31st July, 2004).

For education, a politics of human resistance should ideally be accompanied by a politics of anti-capitalisation. This distinction rests on Marx's insight noted earlier regarding the two great classes of commodities. The politics of human resistance rests on labour power, the unique, special 'class of one'. Yet schools in England are gradually being *capitalised*; they are being crafted by New Labour's education policies into areas of commodity production, value creation and profit. This is what I have called the business takeover of schools (Rikowski, 2005), and the commodities developed through these processes belong to Marx's 'general class' of commodities.

The capitalisation of schools has spawned a significant politics: the politics of anti-capitalisation does exist to some extent, from pressure groups like the Campaign for State Education (CASE), to the National Union of Teachers (NUT) policies and resolutions on school privatisation, to campaigns against Academies and their business sponsors. The politics of human resistance, on the other hand, is very under-developed, almost to the point of non-existence. Some campaigning was done around youth labour and training schemes for unemployed youth such as the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) in the early 1980s, and on its predecessor, the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) by groups such as YOB. There was also some work and campaigning done by labour activists at the Coventry Workshop and the trade unionists working on youth issues in Birmingham in the 1980s. Today, a politics of human resistance has a shadowy existence, and I shall discuss the reasons for this in future work.

For now, one place to start to generate a politics of human resistance is at the chalk face (or PowerPoint slide) itself; in the classroom. Recent work by Peter McLaren is inspirational in this respect (see McLaren 2005 and 2006). From what I have said, and from McLaren's work, a classroom or lecture/seminar room politics of human resistance will never be adequate on its own. It is a much broader conception, as I have indicated. Furthermore, mainstream Left parties, groups and sects are unlikely to take on this politics. Using Marxist analysis and critique to reach strategic conclusions regarding what should be done, based on locating the weak points in the rule of capital, is not very well entrenched in the Left in the UK. If labour power is capital's weakest link, then anti-capitalists should hammer away at the social processes that play the leading roles in the social production of labour power in contemporary society: education and training. The link must be broken to the benefit of human and individual progress and well-being and new forms of labour power and humanity forged in the process.

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