CNI/EZLN: The Time Has Come

This communique was originally published by Enlace Zapatista.

To To the People of Mexico,
To the Peoples of the World,
To the Media,
To the National and International Sixth,

We send our urgent word to the world from the Constitutive Assembly for the Indigenous Governing Council, where we met as peoples, communities, nations, and tribes of the National Indigenous Congress: Apache, Amuzgo, Chatino, Chichimeca, Chinanteco, Chol, Chontal of Oaxaca, Chontal of Tabasco, Coca, Cuicateco, Mestizo, Hñähñü, Ñathö, Ñuhhü, Ikoots, Kumiai, Lakota, Mam, Matlazinca, Maya, Mayo, Mazahua, Mazateco, Me`phaa, Mixe, Mixe-Popoluca, Mixteco, Mochó, Nahua or Mexicano, Nayeri, Popoluca, Purépecha, Q´anjob´al, Rarámuri, Tének, Tepehua, Tlahuica, Tohono Odham, Tojolabal, Totonaco, Triqui, Tseltal, Tsotsil, Wixárika, Xi´iuy, Yaqui, Binniza, Zoque, Akimel O´otham, and Comkaac.

THE WAR THAT WE LIVE AND CONFRONT

We find ourselves in a very serious moment of violence, fear, mourning, and rage due to the intensification of the capitalist war against everyone, everywhere throughout the national

territory. We see the murder of women for being women, of children for being children, of whole peoples for being peoples.

The political class has dedicated itself to turning the State into a corporation that sells off the land of the originary peoples, campesinos, and city dwellers, that sells people as if they were just another commodity to kill and bury like raw material for the drug cartels, that sells people to capitalist businesses that exploit them until they are sick or dead, or that sells them off in parts to the illegal organ market.

Then there is the pain of the families of the disappeared and their decision to find their loved ones despite the fact that the government is determined for them not to, because there they will also find the rot that rules this country.

This is the destiny that those above have built for us, bent on the destruction of the social fabric—what allows us to recognize ourselves as peoples, nations, tribes, barrios, neighborhoods, and families—in order to keep us isolated and alone in our desolation as they consolidate the appropriation of entire territories in the mountains, valleys, coasts, and cities.

This is the destruction that we have not only denounced but confronted for the past 20 years and which in a large part of the country is evolving into open war carried out by criminal corporations which act in shameless complicity with all branches of the bad government and with all of the political parties and institutions. Together they constitute the power of above and provoke revulsion in millions of Mexicans in the countryside and the city.

In the midst of this revulsion they continue to tell us to vote for them, to believe in the power from above, to let them continue to design and impose our destiny.

On that path we see only an expanding war, a horizon of death and destruction for our lands, our families, and our lives, and the absolute certainty that this will only get worse—much worse—for everyone.

OUR WAGER

We reiterate that only through resistance and rebellion have we found possible paths by which we can continue to live and through which we find not only a way to survive the war of money against humanity and against our Mother Earth, but also the path to our rebirth along with that of every seed we sow and every dream and every hope that now materializes across large regions in autonomous forms of security, communication, and self-government for the protection and defense of our territories. In this regard there is no other path than the one walked below. Above we have no path; that path is theirs and we are mere

obstacles.

These sole alternative paths, born in the struggle of our peoples, are found in the indigenous geographies throughout all of our Mexico and which together make up the National Indigenous Congress. We have decided not to wait for the inevitable disaster brought by the capitalist hitmen that govern us, but to go on the offensive and convert our hope into an Indigenous Governing Council for Mexico which stakes its claim on life from below and to the anticapitalist left, which is secular, and which responds to the seven principles of Rule by Obeying as our moral pledge.

No demand of our peoples, no determination and exercise of autonomy, no hope made into reality has ever corresponded to the electoral ways and times that the powerful call "democracy". Given that, we intend not only to wrest back from them our destiny which they have stolen and spoiled, but also to dismantle the rotten power that is killing our peoples and our mother earth. For that task, the only cracks we have found that have liberated consciences and territories, giving comfort and hope, are resistance and rebellion.

By agreement of this constitutive assembly of the Indigenous Governing Council [CIG when abbreviated in Spanish], we have decided to name as spokesperson our compañera María de Jesús Patricio Martínez of the Nahuatl people, whose name we will seek to place on the electoral ballot for the Mexican presidency in 2018 and who will be the carrier of the word of the peoples who make up the CIG, which in turn is highly representative of the indigenous geography of our country.

So then, we do not seek to administer power; we want to dismantle it from within the cracks from which we know we are able.

OUR CALL

We trust in the dignity and honesty of those who struggle: teachers, students, campesinos, workers, and day laborers, and we want to deepen the cracks that each of them has forged, dismantling power from above from the smallest level to the largest. We want to make so many cracks that they become our honest and anticapitalist government.

We call on the thousands of Mexicans who have stopped counting their dead and disappeared and who, with grief and suffering, have raised their fists and risked their own lives to charge forward without fear of the size of the enemy, and have seen that there are indeed paths but that they have been hidden by corruption, repression, disrespect, and exploitation.

We call on those who believe in themselves, who believe in the compañero at their side, who

believe in their history and their future: we call on them to not be afraid to do something new, as this is the only path that gives us certainty in the steps we take.

Our call is to organize ourselves in every corner of the country, to gather the necessary elements for the Indigenous Governing Council and our spokeswoman to be registered as an independent candidate for the presidency of this country and, yes, to crash the party of those above which is based on our death and make it our own, based on dignity, organization, and the construction of a new country and a new world.

We convoke all sectors of society to be attentive to the steps decided and defined by the Indigenous Governing Council, through our spokeswoman, to not give in, to not sell out, and to neither stray nor tire from the task of carving the arrow that will carry the offensive of all of the indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, organized or not, straight toward the true enemy.

From CIDECI-UNITIERRA, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas

May 28, 2017

For the Full Reconstitution of Our Peoples

Never Again a Mexico Without Us

National Indigenous Congress

Zapatista Army for National Liberation

James Boggs: Towards a New Concept of Citizenship

This pamphlet was accessed from the Boggs Center's website.

JACOB LAWRENCE. THE 1920'S...THE MIGRANTS ARRIVE AND CAST THEIR BALLOTS. 1974

This speech was selected, edited, and prepared for publication by Alternatives, Detroit based organization which no longer exists. They wrote the introduction, did most of the basic work involved, and have financed its publication.

Introduction

This pamphlet was originally a speech given by James Boggs to the graduate class in the School of Architecture at the University of Michigan on November 9, 1976. However, it is of interest to all of us concerned with the rapidly deteriorating quality of life in this country. A few questions can highlight this situation: why is it that we cannot safely walk the streets at night when we are supposedly the most "civilized" society in the world? Why do we often pay the price of leaving behind old friends and communities in order to advance to the next rung on the ladder of success? And why, in the age of mass media, do we remain ignorant of how the social and political decisions which affect our daily lives are made?

These contradictions have arisen out of our pursuit of individual economic interests to the exclusion of the public good. In order to reverse this trend, each of us must begin to question how our daily actions affect the larger community. We must also begin asking what kind of values we want these actions to represent. As we all know, America was founded by people who wanted to guide their own destiny and thereby became the modern world's first citizens.

This pamphlet shows how important citizenship is in beginning to correct the problems we are facing today. Unless we once again begin the process of self government, decisions will continue to be made at the expense of the public good which is, ultimately, at our expense. Reading this pamphlet is a step towards creating a new concept of citizenship.

TOWARDS A NEW CONCEPT OF CITIZENSHIP

Last year when I spoke to this class, I talked about how, in the pursuit of individual success, millions of Americans have chosen the road of getting ahead in the economic arena. Therefore, we have become a nation of individualists who believe that the further we get away from the communities or areas where we grew up, the more successful we are. In other words, the greater the distance we put between ourselves and other individuals from our past, the more we have achieved. Most Americans believe this even if it means that we have to move every two or three years and live and work among strangers most of our adult life; even though it means that we, and particularly those of us who are women, have no relatives or childhood friends on whom we can depend for babysitting and day-to-day advice; and even though it means that we cannot depend upon our neighbors or others in the community to help raise our children or in emergencies.

I went on to show how our tendency to evaluate ourselves and other people by the status that we have achieved in our so called progress on the ladder of success has now led to serious objective and subjective contradictions in our society. Our cities are mushrooming at the expense of the countryside; our economy is run by monstrous multinational corporations headed by executives and specialists who have no loyalty to this country or to any community. With every year, more and more of our old people and our young people

especially the black, the uneducated and the unskilled are reduced to parasites. And we have become more afraid of one another than people used to be of wild animals. Each person has become a lonely individualist, narrowed down to a cog in a machine, with no individuality and no sense of citizenship. That is, we have no sense that our actions and decisions matter or that each of us has a responsibility for the whole society.

I explained that we are presently in this very dangerous situation because we have for so long believed that all our social and human problems could be solved by economic growth and advancing technology, and because we have left all the decisions with regard to our economy and the government to the professional politician. That is why we got trapped in the war in Vietnam, that is why we had Watergate, and that is why we are totally alienated from one another as human beings — even though, technologically, we are so advanced.

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

What has happened in recent weeks during the election campaign for the Presidency has made all of this much clearer. Last week, the American people participated in another sweepstakes or horse race in which we went to the polls or race track to cast lots for our next president. By a mere shift in a few votes in each state one man, Carter, won over another man, Ford, in a race which one man had to win and whose outcome had been predicted by pollsters before we even went to the polls. Now the analysts and the pollsters are writing hundreds of articles on why Carter won out over Ford. Yet the main question is not why Carter won over Ford but why millions of Americans continue to participate in this kind of sweepstakes every four years.

All of us witnessed the two conventions during the summer. We saw how a grand coalition of blacks, hardhats, women, project directors and labor leaders, representing the outsiders in this society came together and selected Carter to be the Democratic candidate because, out of all the Democratic horses, they felt he was the one who could win and therefore make it possible for them to get closer to the trough where the goodies of this society are distributed. On the other hand, we saw how the middle classes came together at the Republican convention and defeated the Reaganites who spoke for the big farmers, oil magnates, utilities, etc., because they felt Ford, as the incumbent who was closer to the center than Reagan, could win for the Republican Party.

In each group there were people who were antagonistic and competing with one another, but they put aside their differences long enough to draw up a party platform so that they could get to the main business–selecting a candidate who could win for the party. Therefore, after all the hullabaloo of drafting the party platform, this platform was never referred to again the day after the selection of the ticket, neither candidate ran on the party platform. Nor was the convention ever referred to again during the whole campaign, It is as if the

convention had never taken place and as if the platform adopted by the convention had been put through a paper shredder. So now we know, or should know, that the convention and all the so-called debates on the party platform were just another spectacle, a show that had been put on to entertain the American mass audience and to provide some suspenseful "happenings" around which the commercials could be telecast.

The result is that today we have a new president, but no one in the country knows what he stands for or will advocate in government policy just as we never knew what Ford would do on any given issue when he was president. The president is only a personality who does not represent a body of political ideas and a party platform. He is an individual who will react to issues as they arise, wavering from one side to the other in making his decisions in accordance with how he and his staff estimate these decisions will help or hurt his chance for reelection. We did not elect a person representing a party to which he is accountable and which is accountable to him, a party which had developed a body of ideas and a program which we could discuss, take sides on, and help to implement. All we did was elect an individual who, we can be sure, will say the most popular thing at the right time and will avoid saying anything that will embarrass him or alienate too many sections of the population because this will endanger his reelection.

Thus, in essence, the presidential campaign was not a political campaign. It was not a campaign to make clear the mounting contradictions of this society and the choices we will have to make in order to resolve these contradictions. It did not give us any opportunity to develop ourselves politically through discussion and struggle over fundamental issues. All we did was go to the polls, the way that we might have gone to the racetrack, to vote for a personality. And now that the race is over, we have no role to play in making or in carrying out decisions.

In the meantime, while some people are speculating on who is going to get appointed to this and that post, and what the president will or will not do on this or that issue and while the sociologists are analyzing why and how people voted in order to provide the professional politicians with the data with which to figure out how to win the next elections, the system — that is the government, the economy and the society — is continuing on its not so merry way.

BUREAUCRACY AS USUAL

In Washington, the military industrial complex and the Welfare State are going ahead full steam. Military contracts are being negotiated and renegotiated, and the industries, which are dependent upon these con- tracts, are operating and tooling up in complete confidence that they will continue to be an integral part of the economy. The Housing, Education and Welfare bureaucracy, which administers billions of dollars in construction contracts and

social services, are continuing to administer these billions of dollars. The network of building contracts and real estate operators and education and welfare bureaucrats are going about their business as usual, confident that their part of the system will continue without fundamental change.

The only difference is that one group of individuals at the top of this bureaucracy — Republicans — will be displaced by another group of individuals –Democrats. In other words, Democrats, and friends of these Democrats, will now have a good chance to replace Republicans in the well paying jobs that this bureaucracy controls from top to bottom, but nothing about government or the economy, what it does and how it works, will change. It will continue to be a Warfare and Welfare State because ever since the Depression of the 30's, it has been clear that the American economy would collapse if it were not for military production and for the billions of dollars handed out yearly in building contracts and various forms of benefits by the national government. The multinational corporations will continue to expand and the gulf between elite specialists and unskilled masses will continue to grow.

The main difference between Carter and Ford is that Carter will probably create more projects than Ford did because he has to placate the unions and the various minority groups who made his election possible. So, with Carter, the government and the system will become more of what it is already– a government and a system which is continually reducing more and more Americans to subjects and making a mockery of citizenship.

Now that the elections are over, most people are saying that they are sick of politics, just as when the pro football or pro basketball seasons are over they say that they are tired of football or basketball and are ready for another sport. This is because every year politics in this country has become like professional sports or a huge spectacle in which the voters are passive spectators at a multi-million dollar game between two teams, each competing to win so that the thousands of individuals who make up their staffs can control the big prize of hundreds of billions of dollars which, the government spends each year. Which team wins the presidency makes no more difference to the American government or the American economy than a new king or queen makes to the British government or British economy. One president may have a different style than the other. For example, Carter's style is obviously more activist than Ford's, just as Princess Margaret's style is more flamboyant than Queen Elizabeth's. But whichever one is in the White House, the military industrial complex and the Welfare state continue to go ahead at full steam. The only difference is that more blacks and members of minority groups will now be drawn into the career of politics to become part of the apparatus of a half million professional elected politicians because electoral politics is one of the country's growth industries.

WHAT ARE OUR HUMAN NEEDS ?

Now if this analysis is accurate and it is an analysis which everyone can verify from their own experience what does it mean for the future? Does the future have to be just a continuation of the present or just more of the same? If so, are we ready to settle for a future in which each of us is constantly and increasingly being reduced to a subject or a cog in a machine? Are we ready to settle for a society in which each of us acquires more material things each year but is only a consumer and a contributor to the Gorss National Product? Can we be satisfied that each of us can earn 10% more next year than this year? If so, how will we be able to judge when we have enough? Are we so greedy and arrogant that we are ready to say, as one of our leading tycoons said a century ago, "I will have enough only when I have it all and control it all. What is this "enough" which we consider so important?

I raise these questions because nowadays most Americans have completely lost sight of the most fundamental qualities of living which any society must treasure and struggle to enhance if that society is to long endure. It has never been difficult to mobilize people to struggle for material needs because people know very well when their bellies are empty or when they are freezing because they lack shelter and clothing. But it is much more difficult to mobilize people to struggle for human needs because human needs reflect spiritual hungers which are much more difficult to articulate and make clear to oneself, let alone to other people. For example, in order to be human, we need to feel that we can walk the streets without fearing each other, that we don't need to spend millions of dollars each year on police dogs and security locks and electronic gadgets to protect our homes and our personal possessions; that our security doesn't come from policemen or from police dogs but from the value and concern which each of us has for others because we value and cherish human beings more than we cherish material things and individual success.

In order to be human, we need to feel that we belong to a community where people of different ages and interests have grown to depend upon one another because over the years our personal lives and the life of the community have become interdependent. We need to feel that we can look to our neighbors for help in keeping the streets clean, in raising our children, in looking out for each other. In order to be human, we need to feel that the work we do is useful and that we are not only doing it for pay or profit but because it is socially necessary. That is, we are making things that people really need. In order to be human, we need to feel that we are in control of our lives. We need to believe that our decisions and actions make a difference in how we and our co-citizens live, and whether our community is one that we can be proud of and in how our country is run.

Up to a few years ago, all over the world and even in the United States where economic success and individual social mobility have been more highly valued than anywhere else, people did value their social relations more than they valued material things. We did feel that we belonged to communities– to rural communities in the South and Midwest, and to

ethnic communities in the cities. We took pride in our work in the foundry, on the assembly line and elsewhere, even when this work was dirty and unskilled, because we thought that it was socially necessary and that it was helping to meet the real material needs of the people. We felt that our decisions and our actions and our struggles made a difference not only to our own lives but to the improvement of the whole country. So there was meaning to our economic struggles and political and & social struggles.

It is only since the technological explosion made possible by World War II that all this has begun to change.

Today, as a result of our modern technology, we are an expiring mobile society of consumers, buying the products as fast as they can be produced and made known to us by advertising. Instead of being people, we have become masses– individuals who believe that consumption and possession are what life is all about and therefore believe in ways that can easily be predicted by market researchers. The technology that we continue to develop is intervening with Nature itself with the result that we live in constant danger of the whole planet being destroyed. The atmosphere and vegetation, which we depend upon for our sustenance, is being fundamentally altered and even the chemistry of our bodies is being changed by such technological creations as the 'pill'.

Meanwhile, as the quality of life continues to decline and the dangers to our planet increase, the only solutions that we can think of are in the form of more technology.

Yet as the recent election campaign demonstrated, none of those who claim to be giving us political leadership thought these questions important enough to raise during the campaign. And most Americans continue to believe that some more of the same is what we need most. We have for so long been taught to believe that technology and economics or the creation and possession of more goods are the solution to all of our problems. Therefore, each of us continues to pursue this goal and to support those political leaders who promise more of the same.

Here at the university, where you might expect that there would be some fundamental rethinking on these profound questions, we find the same thing taking place. Our universities are each year turning out more and more students with all kinds of degrees and skills to fit into and expand the existing system. Meanwhile, as the universities grow bigger and bigger, the ability of the students to make socially responsible decisions continues to decline. Instead of wondering about the need to develop people who are able to govern this country, the faculty and administration of the university continue to function in accordance with the pragmatic and utilitarian philosophy that if they equip students with the tools to earn a good living, they have done their job. Despite the fact that all around the university and on campus itself, all of the students are being reduced to cogs in the machine of

American economic and technological advancement; each student continues to think only of his or her individual ambitions and not of the needs of the whole society. So there is no movement on the campuses which is making a fundamental challenge to this system and this philosophy.

WHAT KIND OF TECHNOLOGY DO WE NEED ?

The only difference between last year and this year is that the questions we raised last year have become more pressing and more obvious. This year we should know better than we did last year that we can't solve the problems of crime with more policemen and more locks, any more than we can build a sense of community with some new houses or shopping centers or Renaissance Centers. We can't solve the crisis of energy by the development of more technology because this new technology uses up as much energy in its production as it might save later and because there is only so much fossil fuel created by Nature. We can't solve the problems of pollution by building anti-pollution technology because the production of this new technology itself creates pollution. We can't resolve the question of national defense by producing more advanced types of bombs and bombers to kill more and more people more quickly because the people we seek to intimidate into submission by this technology are as capable of developing technology as we are. In other words, strange as it may seem to us today, the quality of life in our country cannot be fundamentally altered by more technology or more production. Technology does not and cannot substitute for the choices that we as human beings have to make as to what kind of society we want to live in and how much we are ready to struggle to bring that kind of society into being.

In fact, one of the main decisions that we have to make in this country is "what kind of technology should we develop?" and "do we really want to keep some of the technology that we have developed?" (e.g. the pill), or "should we repudiate the dictatorship of the technologically possible, which is the dictatorship under which we live today?" One of the most important things that we have to understand is that the technology which we have is not value free. It is a technology which has come out of a class society which has been more concerned with economic growth than it has been with human values and development, and which, therefore, has been producing more and more specialists and experts at the top even if this meant that more and more people at the bottom of the society and at the top of the age scale had no useful work to do, and even if it meant the destruction of communities and the countryside. In a recent article of the local newspaper, I read that the head of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Michigan said that there are no great philosophers today, because all philosophers today are pragmatists. That the head of a Philosophy Department of a great university could say this is a reflection of how little we in the United States understand about the role of philosophy in any society. What I think he was saying is that in the United States today we have accepted the philosophy of economic determinism. That is, we no longer believe in the capacity of human beings to determine the

course of the society but instead accept the philosophy that human consciousness is determined by economic conditions. At the same time we in the United States also accept the philosophy of individualism. We have no idea of the power that is within us as human beings to struggle together to resolve contradictions that are in every society. We believe that the individual should strive to get ahead materially, regardless of what is happening to the society and to others in the society.

It was this philosophy which enabled people of the United States to go their own way for so many years pursuing economic development and material needs and wants even when they knew that this was taking place at the expense of blacks and other minorities. It was this philosophy which made it possible for us to go into Asia and into Latin America, supporting dictatorial regimes, regardless of how these regimes were trampling on the dignity of their peoples, as long as they gave us ready access to their raw materials and were ready to join in our cold war with communism.

It is this philosophy which enables our oil consortium to make deals with so many Arab rulers to exploit the oil resources even though they can see all around them that the people in these countries are like feudal subjects, without any role in making decisions as to what is going to happen to their national resources.

WE CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN

What we are discovering is that this pragmatic philosophy is catching up with us. The joy ride which we were on, having things more or less our way, is coming to an end because of the standing up of the Third World and because of the limit of the world's natural resources. We face these new problems, which are the result of the solutions we made in the past. In resolving or negating the problems, however, those solutions created new contradictions — many of which serve as dehumanizing factors in our society– everything we are and have become is based on decisions we make and have made in the past. We live in a society that was created by the ideas and deeds of us as human beings. Our forefathers and foremothers, as we are doing now, made the choices and decisions that made us Americans and we must continue to do so as we struggle to become more human, human beings. Nothing can be the same any more. We are at a transition point In the whole world and in our own country, and yet, because we have not tried over the years to develop standards for our actions based upon human values, we today have no standards by which to make the decisions which have become so vital to our continuing existence. We can't decide what should be and what should not be because we have taken so many things for granted as our due. We don't know what is criminal and what is not criminal, what is exploitative and what is not exploitative, what is racist and what is not racist, sexist or nonsexist. All we know is that life itself is becoming more insecure everyday even though we have more of the material things which we thought would provide us with security than any human beings

ever had. We have more industry than any country in the world, and yet we have millions of unemployed who are completely outside these industries. We have more hospitals than any country in the world and yet we have millions of mentally deranged individuals, alcoholics, drug addicts, and chronically ill persons. We have more individual houses than all the world and yet we have millions living in dilapidated, unsanitary houses. We have more jails and detention institutions than any other country in the world and yet we still have millions outside these institutions committing anti-social acts, but we can't incarcerate them in these institutions because there is no room. We have more school buildings and learning institutions than any country in the world, and a larger percentage of our population attends these institutions than in any other country, yet we have millions of semi-literate Americans. And even those who have gone to these institutions only know something about their own little field and have no idea of how to think about the whole society.

When questions of this profundity are raised, most Americans resort to blaming our problems on the politicians or on the "system" They do this because Americans today think so much like victims. We find it easier to blame somebody else rather than to ask ourselves what is it that we have done or have not done to bring this situation into existence?

CHANGING OURSELVES FIRST

However, we can't just continue to shift the burden on to somebody else's shoulders expecting those people to change when they are the ones who benefit most by the situation.

What we must begin to do is what we find hardest to do–confront our own individualism and materialism, our own going along with the system which has made possible the strengthening and expansion of the system. When we are ready to do this, we will be ready to begin the struggle for the new theory and practice of citizenship which is so urgently needed in the United States today. Most Americans think citizenship is a question of where we are born or of going to the polls to vote for politicians. Few of us realize that this nation was founded by a great revolution which inaugurated an age of revolutions all over the world because it gave men and women a new concept of themselves as self-governing human beings, i.e. as citizens rather than subjects. Instead of looking to kings and bishops to make the difficult decisions which are necessary to the functioning of any society, as the masses in Europe and elsewhere were doing at the time, the men and women of America who made the American Revolution said that people could and should think for themselves and should and could accept responsibility for making social, economic and political decisions. Instead of looking at history as that which can be made only by elites, they believed that people who are ready to work with their minds and hands could build a new world.

In other words, instead of being masses, who think of themselves as victims and only make

demands on others, they were ready to make demands on themselves. Based on this new concept of citizenship and these new principles of the fundamental worth of every human being, they were able through revolutionary struggle to transform themselves into a people–i.e. human beings ready to unite with others to struggle for a better future for themselves and their children.

As you continue your schooling in order to acquire skills to get a job — and I am not suggesting that you quit this — I hope you will give serious thought to this question of the responsibilities of citizenship.

Today as a result of developments over the last two hundred years, the concrete questions which we face are completely different from and infinitely more complex than those faced by the men and women who made the first American Revolution. The coming American Revolution will not be made to complete the first revolution (as most radicals and liberals believe) but to answer new questions that have been created by the successes that we had in developing our economy of abundance and our incredible technology in the last two hundred years. But the fundamental choice remains the same: to believe in the inherent power of human beings to begin afresh, to put public good over private interest, and to become active participants in the ideological and practical struggles necessary to rid ourselves of an economic and political system that reduces us to subjects, so that as active citizens, together, we can create a better society for ourselves and our posterity.

This country is still in its infancy. The ancestors of the overwhelming majority of today's Americans were not among the few millions who founded this nation 200 years ago and established the political and social patterns which have brought us to our present crisis. The ancestors of today's blacks were here but they were excluded from participation in the political and social process even though their labors were building the infrastructure which made possible this country's rapid economic development. Thus the people now living in the United States have had no real experience of the great revolutionary struggles by which any great nation is created.

That political and humanizing experience still lies before us all!

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About the Press

Paradigm Press was started by three individuals after completing a study of *Revolution and Evolution in the 20th Century* by James and Grace Boggs. As well as other writings by the Boggs and the Advocators, it was independently organized to actively support the building of what we see as a growing movement along the ideological direction of the Advocators.

We feel that the growth of this movement and the continuing development of its ideas and practice will demand a more consistent and qualitative publication of Advocator literature. We also believe that there will be a greater demand for this literature simply in terms of quantity. In addition to meeting these needs, we hope that the press will help facilitate a more even development of the movement in other parts of the country relative to Detroit by making both the ideology as a whole and the process of its development more accessible. In a personal sense, we see the press as a way for us to go beyond the study of *Revolution and Evolution in the 20th Century*. The main thrust of our printing at the outset will be of Advocator literature beginning with a series of speeches by James and Grace Boggs. We intend however to also consider and publish writings of various kinds from other sources as well. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or suggestions. A list of available publications will be published in the near future.

Grace Lee Boggs – Education: The Great Obsession

This essay was originally published in the September 1970 issue of Monthly Review.
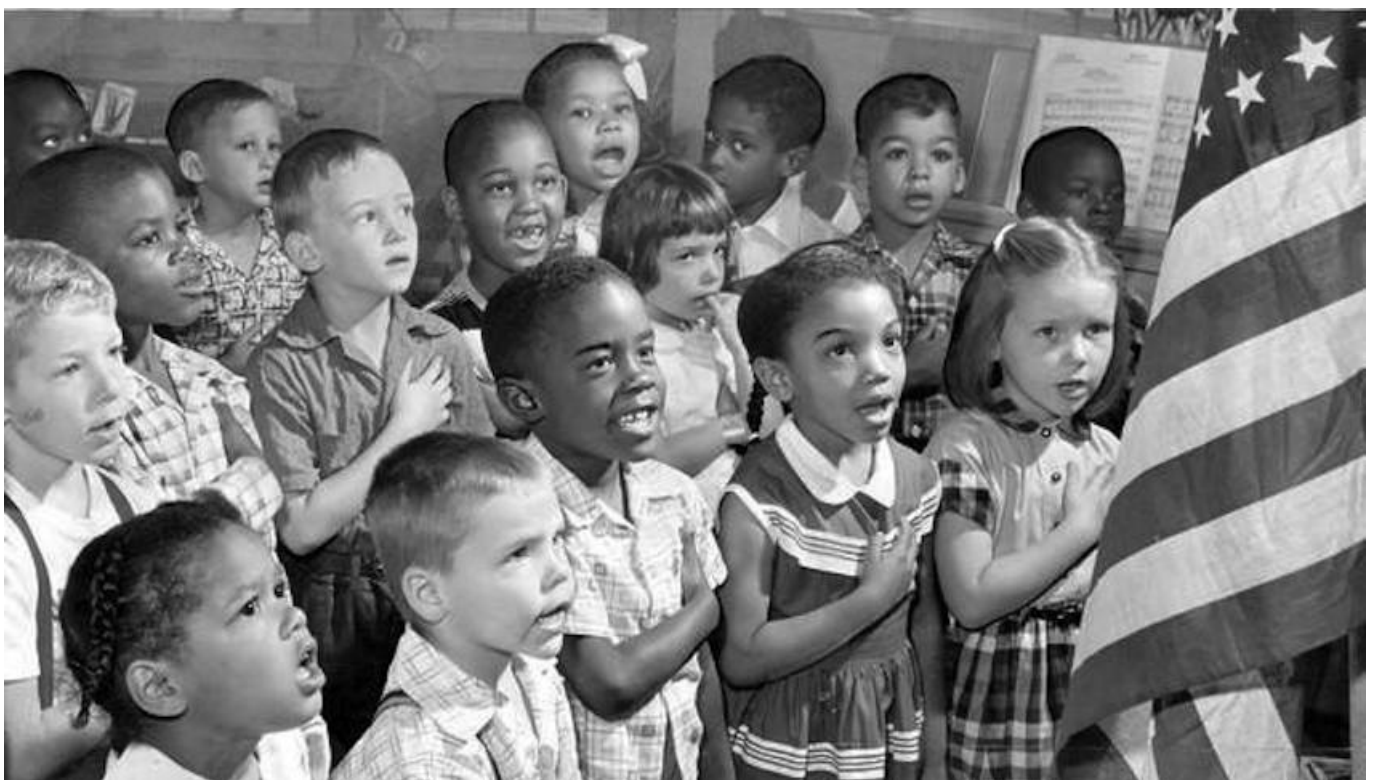
Education today is a great obsession. It is also a great necessity. We, all of us, black and white, yellow and brown, young and old, men and women, workers and intellectuals, have a great deal to learn about ourselves and about the rapidly changing world in which we live. We, all of us, are far from having either the wisdom or the skills that are now more than ever required to govern ourselves and to administer things.

In the present struggle for a new system of education to fulfill this pressing need, the black community constitutes the decisive social force because it is the black community that the present educational system has most decisively failed.

Shortly after the 1969 school term opened, James Allen, the U.S. Commissioner of Education, proclaimed a crash program for the 1970s that showed that he was not equipped to get this country out of its mounting educational crisis. Ten years from now, Allen solemnly promised (or threatened), no child will leave school without being able to read well enough to meet the demands of job and society. The United States has had free public education for over a century. For nearly half a century practically every youngster has been required by federal law to attend school until the age of sixteen. Enough teachers and school facilities exist to support this compulsion. Yet the only goal the U.S. Commissioner of Education has been able to set is the kind already surpassed by literacy drives in new nations where, prior to independence, the great majority of the people never even had schools to go to. For the world and country in which we live, Allen would have been more relevant if he had promised that by the end of the 1970s every school child would be fluent in a second language like Chinese, Russian, or Spanish.

Like other administration programs, Allen's is, of course, a pacification program, aimed at cooling the complaints of personnel managers who are obsessed by the apparent inability of job applicants to fill out employment forms; high school and college instructors who tear out their hair over student errors in spelling and punctuation; and the great majority of Americans, including many vocal black parents, who are still naive enough to believe that if black children could only read they could get better jobs and stop roaming the streets.

Allen's ten-year program will not bring tangible benefits to these complainants. The people who stand to gain most from it are the professional educators who are already lining up for the million-dollar grants that will enable reading experts and testers to test black children, find them wanting, and therefore justify more million-dollar grants to these reading experts to repeat the same remedial reading and compensatory programs that have consistently proved useless.

Since these professional educators are the chief beneficiaries, they are naturally the chief

propagators of certain myths about education, which are unfortunately shared by most Americans. Chief among these are the myths (1) that the fundamental purpose of education in an age of abundance is to increase *earning* power; (2) that the achievement level of children can be defined and measured by their response to words on a printed page; (3) that schools are the best and only place for people to get an education, and therefore that the more young people are compelled to attend school and the more extended the period that they are compelled to attend, the more educated they will become.

The rebellions in secondary schools and colleges during the past few years are a sign that young people, black and white, have already begun to reject these myths. Seventy-five percent of secondary schools have already experienced these rebellions to one degree or another. During the next ten years the struggle to destroy these myths root and branch will continue to escalate. In the black community the struggle will probably take place under the general umbrella of the struggle for community control of schools. In the white community it will probably be around issues of student rights to freedom of dress, speech, assembly, and press. But whatever the focus, any educators, black or white, professional or paraprofessional, who continue to try to run the schools by these myths, will find themselves increasingly resorting to force and violence and/or drugs like Ritalin to keep youth quiet in school and/or to keep so-called troublemakers and trouble out.

How It Developed

The above myths represent the attempt of the public school system to adjust to the changing needs of the American capitalist system over the past fifty years. Because the present school system is so huge and so resistant to change, we tend to think that it has existed forever. Actually it is only about two generations old. In nineteenth-century America (and in Western Europe until the end of the Second World War), the school system was organized to prepare the children of the well-born and well-to-do to govern over the less well-born and not so well-to-do. Thus, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, only 6 percent of U.S. youth graduated from high school.

Early in the twentieth century the mass public school system was developed to assimilate an essentially immigrant working population into the economic, social, and political structure of the American Way of Life. According to this Way, known as American Democracy, those closest to the Founding Fathers in background and culture rule over those who have the furthest to go in achieving this ultimate goal and who meanwhile need to be inculcated with a Founding-Father complex.

To accomplish this objective the schools were organized:

1. To give the children of workers elementary skills in the three Rs that would enable them to function as workers in an industrial society.
2. To give these children proper reverence for the four As: American History, American Technology, the American Free Enterprise System, and American Democracy.
3. To provide a smoothly functioning sifting-mechanism whereby, as Colin Green has phrased it, the "winners" could automatically be sorted from the "losers";[1] that is to say, whereby those individuals equipped by family background and personality to finish high school and go on to college could be selected out from among the great majority on their way to the labor market after a few years of elementary school, or at most a year or so of high school.

This automatic separator worked quite well during the first half of this century. It was acceptable to the European immigrants whose children constituted the core of the urban school population and who, in appreciation for the opportunity to come to the Land of Opportunism, felt the responsibility was *theirs* to become integrated or assimilated into the American Way of Life.

Proceeding from this premise, working-class children from Eastern and Southern European stock (the "losers") dropped out of school quietly around the age of fourteen or fifteen, while the exceptions or "winners," usually those from WASP or Northern European stock, finished high school in preparation for college, which would qualify them to become doctors or lawyers or engineers or teachers. The high-school curriculum and staff were set up on the basis of this implicit stratification. With such elite, highly motivated students, high school teachers had only to know a subject well enough and drill it deep enough into the heads of students so that they would feed it back on college entrance exams.

Thus in 1911 only 11 percent of the high-school-age population was in school; in 1920 only 20 percent. Not until 1930 did the number reach the relatively mass proportion of 51 percent.[2]

During the 1930s, with the shrinking of the unskilled and child labor market, some kinks began to develop in this automatic sorting mechanism. But these were ironed out temporarily when the high schools expanded their skills curriculum to meet the needs of an increasingly technical society, including such subjects as typing and shop, and simultaneously putting greater emphasis on basketball and football in which the children of workers could excel and develop enough sense of belonging not to upset the applecart.

By 1940, 73 percent of high-school-age youngsters, hopeful of gaining higher skills and thus escaping the back-breaking, insecure jobs of their blue-collar parents, were attending high school. Those who dropped out before graduation—which for the last thirty years has averaged approximately one-half of all those entering ninth grade and at least two-thirds of

black youth—could, if they were white, still find such useful jobs as delivery or stock boys, or helpers of various kinds in the many small businesses that still existed, thus adding to the family income. Or they could just make themselves useful around the house doing the chores not yet outmoded by labor-saving devices. During the war years, with a maximum of twelve million Americans in the armed services, there were jobs aplenty for their younger brothers and sisters.

It was not until after the Second World War, and particularly in the 1950s and '60s, that the American school system began to find itself in deep trouble. The Andy Hardy world of the 1930s was disappearing. Mechanization of agriculture and wartime work had brought millions of families to the cities from the farms and from the South—including blacks and Appalachian whites who had heretofore been getting their education catch-as-catch can. With the automation of industry following the Second World War and the Korean War, the swallowing up of small family businesses by big firms, and the widespread use of labor-saving appliances in the average home, the labor of the dropout teenager became surplus and the adolescent became highly visible.

What now should be done with these "losers"? The obvious solution was to keep them in school. Thus, instead of the high schools acting as automatic sifters to sort out the "losers," they were turned into mass custodial institutions to keep everyone in the classroom and off the streets. If at the same time some could also be trained for white-collar jobs, that was a fringe benefit. For the great majority in the high schools, skills training played the same supplementary role that it plays in a juvenile detention home.

By 1960, 90 percent of high-school-age youngsters were attending school. From a relatively elite institution for the college-bound, the high school has been transformed within forty years into a mass detention home. The ideal teacher is no longer the college-entrance-exam-oriented pedagogue but the counselor type who can persuade the average youngster to adjust to this detention or the tough authoritarian who can force it down his or her throat. Since "winners" *and* "losers" are expected to stay in school until graduation, the high school diploma is no longer a sign of academic achievement but of the youngster's seat-warming endurance over a twelve-year period. The success of the public school system itself is now measured in terms of its efficiency in persuading or compelling youth to extend their schooling indefinitely; if possible, not only through high school but on to junior college, with each higher institution acting as a remedial program for the lower.

Meanwhile, to sell the public on the new custodial role of the schools, the myths of education as the magic weapon to open all doors, particularly the door to higher earnings and unlimited consumption, and of the schools as the only place to get an education, have been propagated. Extended schooling has been made into an American obsession. As a number of observers have noted, faith in education has replaced faith in the church as the

salvation of the masses. In the practice of this faith, education has become the nation's second largest industry, expending upwards of $50 billion a year. The professional educator has become the new religion's practicing clergy, constituting the country's largest occupational grouping. At the same time, in order to distract and placate the detainees and to create an outlet for the goods pouring off American assembly lines, the youth market has been created.

The Internal Contradiction Exposed

The internal contradiction between the traditional separator and the new mass custodial roles assigned to the schools was bound to lead to conflict and disintegration: and this, in fact, is what has been taking place over the past twenty years. The black revolt has only brought out into the open and given focus to the mushrooming tensions between elite and average students, and between students and teachers, which first manifested themselves on a city-wide scale in the New York City strike of predominantly white high school students in 1950. No one knows these tensions better than the school teachers and administrators, white and black. But because they have a vested interest in the system, they have for the most part been willing to settle for higher (i.e., combat) pay and better working conditions, such as smaller classes and more preparation time. Teacher organizations to achieve these demands have to some extent met the economic or class needs of teachers as workers. But the more teachers have gained as workers the less they have felt inclined to expose the bankruptcy of the educational system and to make fundamental proposals for its reorganization. They have made the fatal mistake of confusing their role as a special kind of worker engaged in the process of developing human beings with the role of production workers engaged in the process of producing inanimate goods.

It has thus been left to the black community to expose the fundamental contradictions within the system.

The Black Revolt

Prior to the Second World War black youth had been concentrated in the South, not only separate and unequal but practically invisible, as well. With the war a whole generation came North to work in the plants. With rising expectations whetted by relatively stable employment, service in the armed forces, and the postwar nationalist movements in other parts of the world, black parents began to send their children to school in such numbers that black youth now constitute the major part of the school population in most of the big cities from which whites have fled. But the more black kids finished high school the more they discovered that extended education was not the magic key to upward mobility and higher earnings that it had been played up to be. On the job market they soon discovered

that the same piece of paper that qualified white high-school graduates for white-collar jobs only qualified blacks to be tested (and found wanting) for these same jobs. Their teachers, parents, and preachers tried to placate them by explaining how even more education was now needed to qualify for the increasingly skilled jobs demanded by automation. But all around them black youth could see that the jobs that they were told required two or more years of college when occupied by blacks were actually being done by white high-school dropouts.

Accepting at face value the myths about education, black parents began to turn their attention to the schools, only to discover that instead of being places of learning, the schools had become baby-sitting institutions in which their children had been socially promoted year after year, regardless of achievement levels as determined by the schools' own tests.

When school administrators and teachers were challenged to explain this situation, they tried to explain away their own failure by shifting the blame to black children. Hence the theories of the "culturally deprived" and "culturally disadvantaged" child, which have been masquerading as sociological theory since the 1950s. In effect, these educators were saying: "There is nothing wrong with the system; only the wrong children have shown up." Through these alibis the professionals not only hoped to divert the attack back to the black community; they also hoped to hustle more money for themselves in the form of compensatory, remedial, more effective school programs.

But the defense has boomeranged. Forced to defend themselves and their children against the thinly disguised racism of the theory of "cultural deprivation," black parents and the black community have counterattacked. They have exposed the racism of school personnel and school curriculum, the unceasing destruction by the schools of the self-concept of black children so necessary to learning, and the illegitimacy of a system administered by whites when the majority of students are now black. From early demands for integration, the movement jumped quickly to demands for black history, black teachers, black principals, and then, in 1966, with the rising tide of Black Power, to demands for control of schools by the black community, beginning with the struggle over Harlem I.S. 201 in December of that year.

Struggle for Control

During the next five to fifteen years the black community is going to be engaged in a continuing struggle for control of its schools. Sometimes the struggle will be in the headlines and on the picket lines, as in Ocean Hill-Brownsville in 1968. Sometimes it will be less dramatic. But the black community is now unalterably convinced that white control of black schools is destroying black children and can no longer be tolerated.

During the next five to fifteen years the black community will also be redefining education for *this* day, *thi*s age, and *this* country. The overwhelming majority of black students who are not succeeding in the present school system (estimated by New York teachers union President Albert Shanker at 85 percent) have in fact rejected a used, outmoded, useless school system.

Over the past ten years literally billions of dollars have been injected into the schools all over the country—even more than has gone into the moon race—in an attempt to make the system work. In New York City alone the school budget was raised 200 percent until it is now more than one billion dollars a year, or one-third of the entire city budget. The New York teacher-pupil ratio was lowered to an average of 1:17; $70 million of Title I money was poured into the organization of two thousand innovative projects; experts from the twelve colleges in the area were endlessly consulted; money was spent like water; book publishers, project directors, educational consultants were enriched; teachers drew bigger salaries to compensate them for the nightmare of the school day. But the achievement level of black children has continued to fall.

The black community cannot afford to be wasting time fighting for reforms that have already proved worthless. Every week, every month, every year that we waste means that more black children are being wasted. We must reject the racist myth that by keeping kids in school an extra day, an extra week, an extra month, we are giving them a chance to learn a little something or helping to keep them out of mischief. Not only are they not learning in the schools, but the schools in the black community today are little more than mass penal institutions, breeding the same kind of vice and crime that mass penal institutions breed, making the average child an easy prey for the most hardened elements. Day after day, year after year, the will and incentive to learn, which are essential to the continued progress and future development of any people, are being systematically destroyed in millions of black youth, perhaps the most vigorous and resourceful of those between the ages of ten and twenty.

Redefining Education

The key to the new system of education that is the objective of the black movement for community control of schools is contained in the position paper of the Five-State Organizing Committee that was formed at a conference at Harvard University in January 1968. At this conference the black educators and community representatives agreed that *"the function of education must be redefined to make it responsive and accountable to the community."*

The schools today are in the black community but not of it. They are not responsive or accountable to it. If anything they are an enemy force, a Trojan Horse, within it. The

teaching and administrative staff come from outside the community, bringing with them the missionary attitude that they are bearing culture to backward natives—when in fact, like missionaries, they are living off the natives. The subject matter of the schools, beginning with the information about the policeman and the fireman given to first and second graders, is alien to the lives of the children. And, *most important*, students succeed only to the degree that they set their sights toward upgrading themselves as *individuals out of the community*, so that the schools are in fact an organized instrument for a brain drain out of the community.

American education, like American society, is based upon the philosophy of *individualism*. According to this philosophy, the ambitious individual of average or above-average ability from the lower and middle classes is constantly encouraged to climb up the social ladder out of his social class and community. To achieve this goal, like the black Englishman in colonial Africa, he must conduct himself in ways that meet the approval and social standards of those in power, that is to say, as much *unlike* those in his community and as much *like* those in the Establishment as possible. If he does this consistently to the satisfaction of those in power, who are always observing and grading his behavior, he is rewarded by promotion and advancement into the higher echelons of the system. This is what is known as "making it on your own." The more opportunistic you are, the better your chance of "making it."

In the school system this means relating to the teacher and not to your classmates. It means accepting what is taught you as the "objective" or "gospel" or "immaculately conceived" truth which stares at you out of the pages of the textbook. (The textbook itself, of course, is by its very weight and format, organized to convey the impression of permanence and the indubitability of Holy Scripture.) You then feed these truths back to the teacher ("the correct answer"), evading controversial questions that require thinking for yourself or taking a position. If you are willing to do this year after year, giving the "correct answers" on exam after exam, for as long as is necessary to satisfy the "guild" standards of the Establishment, you have it "made." You have proved yourself a sheep as distinguished from the goats. Your parents are proud of you. You can buy a big car to show off before the neighbors, and you become eligible to share in the benefits of high-level corruption in its various forms.

The overwhelming majority of black youth see no relationship between this type of education and their daily lives in the community or the problems of today's world that affect them so intimately. They see automation and cybernation wiping out the jobs for which they are supposedly being prepared—while such jobs as are still available to them are the leftovers that whites won't take (including fighting on the front lines in a war). The book-learning so honored by their teachers and parents seems dull and static compared to what they see on television and experience on the streets. In their own short lives they have seen what passes as truth in books being transformed into lies or obsolescence by living history,

and what passes as objectivity exposed as racist propaganda. Through television they have discovered that behind the words (which in books looked as if they had been immaculately conceived) are human beings, usually white, usually well-off, and usually pompous intellectuals. The result is that as the teacher stands up front bestowing textbook culture on them, they are usually carrying on a silent argument with the teacher—or else turning off their minds altogether.

Not having the drive to succeed in the world at all costs, which is characteristic of the ambitious opportunist, and much more sensitive to what is going on around them, they reject the perspective of interminable schooling without practice or application, which is now built into the educational system. Besieged on all sides by commercials urging them to consume without limit and conscious at the same time of the limitless productivity of American technology, they have abandoned the Protestant ethic of work and thrift. So they roam the streets, aimlessly and restlessly, everyone a potential victim of organized crime and a potential hustler against their own community.

Only One Side Is Right

There are two sides to every question but only one side is right, and in this case the students who have rejected the present system are the ones who are right, even if, understandably, they are unable as yet to propose concrete alternatives.

1. *The individualist, opportunist orientation of American education* has been ruinous to the American community, most obviously, of course, to the black community. In the classroom over the years it isolates children from one another, stifling their natural curiosity about one another as well as their potential for working together. (This process is what the education courses call "socialization.") In the end it not only upgrades out of the community those individuals who might be its natural leaders, fragmenting and weakening precisely those communities that are in the greatest need of strengthening. It also creates the "used" community, which is to be successively inherited by those poorer or darker in color, and which is therefore doomed from the outset to increasing deterioration.
2. *Truth* is not something you get from books or jot down when the teacher holds forth. It has always been and is today more than ever something that is constantly being created through conflict in the social arena and continuing research and experimentation in the scientific arena.
3. *Learning*, especially in this age of rapid social and technical change, is not something you can make people do in their heads with the perspective that years from now, eventually, they will be able to use what they have stored up. By the time you are supposed to use it, it has really become "used." The natural relationship between theory

and practice has been turned upside down in the schools, in order to keep kids off the labor market. The natural way to learn is to be interested *first* and *then* to develop the skill to pursue your interest. As John Holt has written in *How Children Learn*, "The sensible way, the best way, is to start with something worth doing, and then, moved by a strong desire to do it, get whatever skills are needed."A human being, young or old, is not a warehouse of information or skills, and an educational system that treats children like warehouses is not only depriving them of education but also crippling their natural capacity to learn. Particularly in a world of rapidly changing information and skills, learning how to learn is more important than learning specific skills and facts. A human being cannot develop only as a consumer. Depriving children of the opportunity to carry on productive activity is also depriving them of the opportunity to develop the instinct for workmanship, which has made it possible for humanity to advance through the ages. The experience of performance is necessary to learning. Only through doing things and evaluating what they have done can human beings learn the intrinsic relation between cause and effect, thereby developing the capacity to reason. If they are prevented from learning the intrinsic consequences of their own choices of ends and means and made totally dependent on such extrinsic effects as rewards and punishments, they are being robbed of their right to develop into reasoning human beings.

4. Finally, you cannot deprive young people of the rights of social responsibility, and social consciousness, and the ability to judge social issues during the many years they are supposed to attend school and then expect them suddenly to be able to exercise these essential rights when they become adult.

Our children are not learning because the present system is depriving them of such natural stimuli to learning as exercising their resourcefulness to solve the real problems of their own communities; working together, rather than competitively, with younger children emulating older ones and older children teaching younger ones; experiencing the intrinsic consequences of their own actions; judging issues. It is because the present system *wastes* these natural human incentives to learning that its demands on the taxpayer are constantly escalating. It is because those who have succeeded under the present system have ended up as such dehumanized beings—technicians and mandarins who are ready to provide so-called objective skills and information to those in power—that students are in revolt on secondary and college campuses.

Toward a New System

We should now be in a better position to make more concrete the meaning of the proposal to "redefine the function of education in order to make it responsive and accountable to the community."

Instead of schools serving to drain selected opportunists out of the community, they must be functionally reorganized to become centers of the community. This involves much, much more than the use of school facilities for community needs—although this should certainly be expanded. In order for the schools to become the center of the community, *the community itself with its needs and problems must become the curriculum of the schools*.3

More specifically, the educational program or curriculum should *not* consist of subjects like English or algebra or geography. Instead the school must be structured into groups of youngsters meeting in workshops and working as teams. These teams are then encouraged to (1) *identify* the needs or problems of the community; (2) to *choose* a certain need or problem as a focus of activity; (3) to *plan a program* for its solution; and (4) to *carry out the steps* involved in the plan.

In the course of carrying out such a curriculum, students naturally and normally, as a part of the actual process, acquire a number of skills. For example, they must be able to do *research* (observe, report, pinpoint—all related to the social and physical geography of the community); set *goals* or objectives; *plot steps* toward the achievement of these goals; *carry out* these steps; *evaluate* or measure their progress toward their goals.

Through such a curriculum, research becomes a means of building the community rather than what it is at present, a means by which the Establishment prepares counterinsurgency or pacification programs against the community. Through the solution of real community problems, students discover the importance not only of *skills* and *information* but also of the *ideas* and *principles* that must guide them in setting and pursuing goals. In the *struggle* to transform their physical and social environment, they discover that their enemies are not only external but internal, within the community and within their own selves. Thus the weaknesses or needs of the community become assets in the learning process rather than the handicap or drawback that they are presently conceived to be.

With the community and, at times, the entire city as a learning laboratory, students are no longer confined to the classroom. The classroom is an adjunct to the community rather than the reverse. Students have an opportunity to exercise responsibility by identifying problems and by proposing and testing solutions, with the teachers acting as advisers, consultants, and instructors in specific skills. Students from various teenage groups can work in teams on the various projects, with each contributing according to his or her abilities at the various stages, younger students learning from older ones, and those with the capacity for leadership having an opportunity to exercise it.

One of the most important community needs, and one that naturally suggests learning activities, is the need for community information that can be met by student-produced newspapers, magazines, TV news and documentary programs, films, etc.

Education to Govern

No one should confuse this curriculum with a curriculum for vocational education—either in the old sense of preparing young blacks for menial tasks or in the up-to-date form in which Michigan Bell Telephone Company and Chrysler adopt high schools in the black community in order to channel black youth into low-level jobs. The only possible resemblance between these proposals and vocational education is the insistence on the opportunity for productive life-experiences as essential to the learning process. Otherwise what is proposed is the very opposite of vocational education. It is indeed education or preparation for the tasks of governing.

Concrete programs that prepare black youth to govern are the logical next step for rebellious black youth who, having reached the stage of Black Power in the sense of Black Pride, Black Consciousness, and total rejection of the present social system, are not sure where to go. Young people whose *self-concept* has undergone a fundamental change must be given concrete opportunities to change their *actual* conditions of life. Otherwise, they can only exhaust and demoralize themselves in isolated acts of adventurism or in symbolic acts of defiance or escapism.

The fundamental principles underlying such programs are crucial to elementary as well as secondary school education. These principles are:

1. The more human beings experience in life and work, i.e., the more they have the opportunity to experience the intrinsic consequences of their own activity, the more able they are to learn and the more anxious they are to learn. Conversely, the more human beings, and particularly young people, are deprived of the opportunity to live and work and experience the consequences of their own activities, the more difficult it is for them to learn and the more they are turned off from learning.
2. The most important factor in learning is interest and motivation; and conversely the more you cut off motivation and interest, the harder it is to learn.

This principle is especially relevant to the question of reading. If you try to force children to read, you can turn them off from reading in the same way that generations of children have been turned off from music by compulsory music lessons. Actually reading is much less difficult than speaking, which kids learn pretty much on their own. Once the relation between letters and sounds is learned—a matter of only a few weeks the reading development of children depends almost entirely upon interest and self-motivation. Thus, almost every good reader is actually self-taught.

When young children are regimented in the average elementary school classroom on the

false assumption that children of the same chronological age have the same attention span and learn at the same pace and rhythm, what happens is that the great majority stop learning altogether,4 *becoming either passive or defiant*. Few parents know that in the average classroom most children are paying attention only about ten minutes out of the three-hundred-minute school day. The rest of the time they are trying to get into trouble or stay out of trouble. The few children in a classroom who can adjust to the rhythms arbitrarily set by the teacher become the "bright ones," while the others are categorized from very early as the "dumb ones." The tracking system is not the product of a particular teacher's biases; it is built into the system of forced learning. Parents particularly must begin to try to envisage a classroom reorganized to provide the opportunity for children to move about freely, choose among activities, learn what they are interested in learning, learn from each other and from their own mistakes.

Obviously the range of choice and area of activity cannot be as broad for younger children as it is for teenagers. But once we get rid of the stereotypes of wild children who must be forced to learn, we will be able to think in terms of curriculum and structure for elementary schools. For example, classroom space could easily be subdivided into sections, each of which is associated not with specific children but rather with activities: a library and writing space where "reading and writing will be in the air," a rest and privacy space, an arts and crafts space, a play space. Children would be able to move from one area to another as they choose. The teacher could remain fixed at times—available for consultation—or at others move about from space to space. Children of different ages, within a particular range, could learn from each other.

The Opposition

We must have no illusion that it will be easy to reorganize American education, and particularly education in the black community, along these lines. Vicious as well as subtle opposition will come from all those with a stake in the present system: teachers and administrators who have climbed up the social and economic ladder within the framework of the old system and who now think they have earned the right to make others undergo the same ordeal; the publishing industry, which is making such huge profits off the school system; city agencies like the Board of Health, the Board of Education, the Fire Department, the Police Department, the Sanitation Department; the building industries and the unions; the merchants and finance companies. Concerned only with their own vested interest in living off the black community, they can be expected to raise a hue and cry about "irresponsible youth taking over" and "child labor."

Some very fundamental questions are posed here, questions that American society will have to face sooner rather than later, because it is obviously impossible to reorganize an

educational system completely without reorganizing the social system it serves.

First of all, who are the irresponsible ones? The young people who will be trying to improve their communities? Or the institutions and agencies (supported by their parents' taxes) who have been presiding over its deterioration? The issue here therefore is not young people but the same issue as that involved in the right of the black community to self-determination. Obviously what these opponents fear is not just youth but the threat to their continuing control, the exposure of their shortcomings, and programs that may end in their replacement.

On the question of "child labor," it should be emphasized that what we are proposing is not "labor" at all. *Labor* is activity that is done for wages under the control of persons or organizations exploiting this labor for profit. What we are talking about is *work* that the young people choose to do for the purpose of improving the community and under their own direction.

However, the clash is unavoidable. Because labor has been the only means for survival and advancement in this society, and because increasing automation and cybernation have cut down jobs, any kind of productive activity has now become a privilege monopolized by adults and increasingly denied to youth. The whole process is now reaching the absurd proportions of older people doing jobs that could be more safely and easily done by youth, while youth are supposed to stay in school, expending their energies in play, postponing the responsibilities of work and adult life, on the promise that longer schooling will make them capable of better jobs. Meanwhile the skills they are acquiring become obsolete. The whole procedure is based on the false assumption that education is only for the young and that it must be completed before you start to work and live. Actually the time is coming when society will have to recognize that education must be a lifelong process for old and young. In the end a rational society will have to combine work and study for all ages and for people in every type of activity, from manual to intellectual.

Rallying to the support of all these vested interests we can expect the intellectuals, social scientists, and physical scientists, claiming that by such programs society will be drying up the supply of experts, intellectuals, scientists, etc. The charge is absurd. Such programs will increase the supply because they will stimulate the desire for learning in great numbers of youth who in the past were turned off from learning.

The Struggle

In the long and the short run, the opposition of all these vested interests can be overcome only if black parents and black students begin to see that this is the only kind of education

that is relevant in this country at this stage, particularly for black people, and that unless we embark on a protracted struggle for this kind of education, our children will continue to be wasted.

That is why the struggle for community control of schools is so important.

The black community will have to struggle for community control of schools. It can struggle most effectively, that is to say, involve and commit the greatest number of people from the community, if it can propose concrete programs for reorganizing education to meet the real and urgent needs of the black community.

The organic, inherent, irreversible weakness of the present educational power structure is its complete inability to develop such programs because it has been organized and is structured only for the purposes of producing an elite and detaining the mass. Hence the strategic importance of fighting them on this front by developing concrete programs for curriculums that the black community can regard as its own and therefore insist that the schools implement. The time is especially ripe for such proposals because mushrooming decentralization programs are of necessity contradictory and confusing, creating areas in which no one is quite sure who has decision-making power.

The Total Community

In the preceding I have concentrated on the needs of the black community because it is in the vanguard of the struggle for community control of schools and therefore more immediately faced with the question of how to redefine education. But this is not only a black question. During the next five to fifteen years, increasing numbers of white students are also going to turn their backs on the educational system, not only in college but in high school. At the present time the majority of white students still accept the system because their little pieces of paper are still a passport to jobs and college. But even if the white school front remains quiet, every concerned citizen should be asking: "Do we really want our children to end up, like Nixon's Great Silent Majority, ambitious only for their own financial advancement and security, apathetic except when confronted by blacks moving into their neighborhoods or competing for their jobs, afraid not only of blacks but of their own children and indeed of any fundamental social change to meet the needs of changing technology, acquiescing in the decisions of the Mayor Daleys, the Judge Hoffmans, the Spiro Agnews, and eventually the George Wallaces?"

These whites did not come from outer space any more than did the "good silent Germans" of Hitler's day. They are the products of the American educational system, which has been organized to fit the American Way of Life. It was in the public schools that Nixon's Great

Silent Majority learned, through a systematized procedure, the values of materialism, individualism, opportunism, and docility in the presence of authority. It was in the schools that they were systematically indoctrinated with the myth that truth is what you read in books or hear from those in power, and with the ideology that this is not only the best of possible worlds but that it operates with the inevitability of natural law, making it futile to criticize or oppose its operations. ("What's the use? It's always been this way and it's always going to be this way.") It was in the schools that the seeds of their present fears and powerlessness to rebel against authority were systematically sown.

All these are the values against which today's youth, black and white, coming of age in a world of unprecedented technological and social revolution, are in revolt. Today's youth is determined to have power over its own conditions of life. But the public school system has failed to prepare today's Great Silent Majority to understand its own youth, let alone the need to transform itself to cope with the rapid changes taking place.

It therefore is the schools that must accept a share of the responsibility for creating the contradiction that now threatens this country's destruction, the contradiction between being the technologically most advanced and the politically most undeveloped country in the world. They are also one of the weakest links in the system's chain of operations.

Before the present system of education was initiated some two generations ago, education was only for the *elite*, to prepare them to govern over their subjects. Then came *mass education*, to prepare the great majority for labor and to advance a few out of their ranks to join the elite in governing. This system is now falling apart as a result of its own internal contradictions, with the cost being borne at the present time by the black community. That is why it is so urgent that we develop a new system of education that will have as its means and its end the development of the great masses of people to *govern over themselves and to administer over things*.

Notes

1. ↩ Colin Green, "Public Schools: Myth of the Melting Pot," *Saturday Review*, November 15, 1969.
2. ↩ James Coleman, *Adolescents and the Schools* (New York: Basic Books, 1965).
3. ↩ See Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (New York: Delacorte Press), 1969.
4. ↩ Black parents who send their children to Catholic schools on the basis that in that "law 'n' order" environment their kids at least learn their three R's should reflect on what this authoritarian environment may be doing to their children's real, i.e., creative, learning potential.

Theodor W. Adorno: Resignation
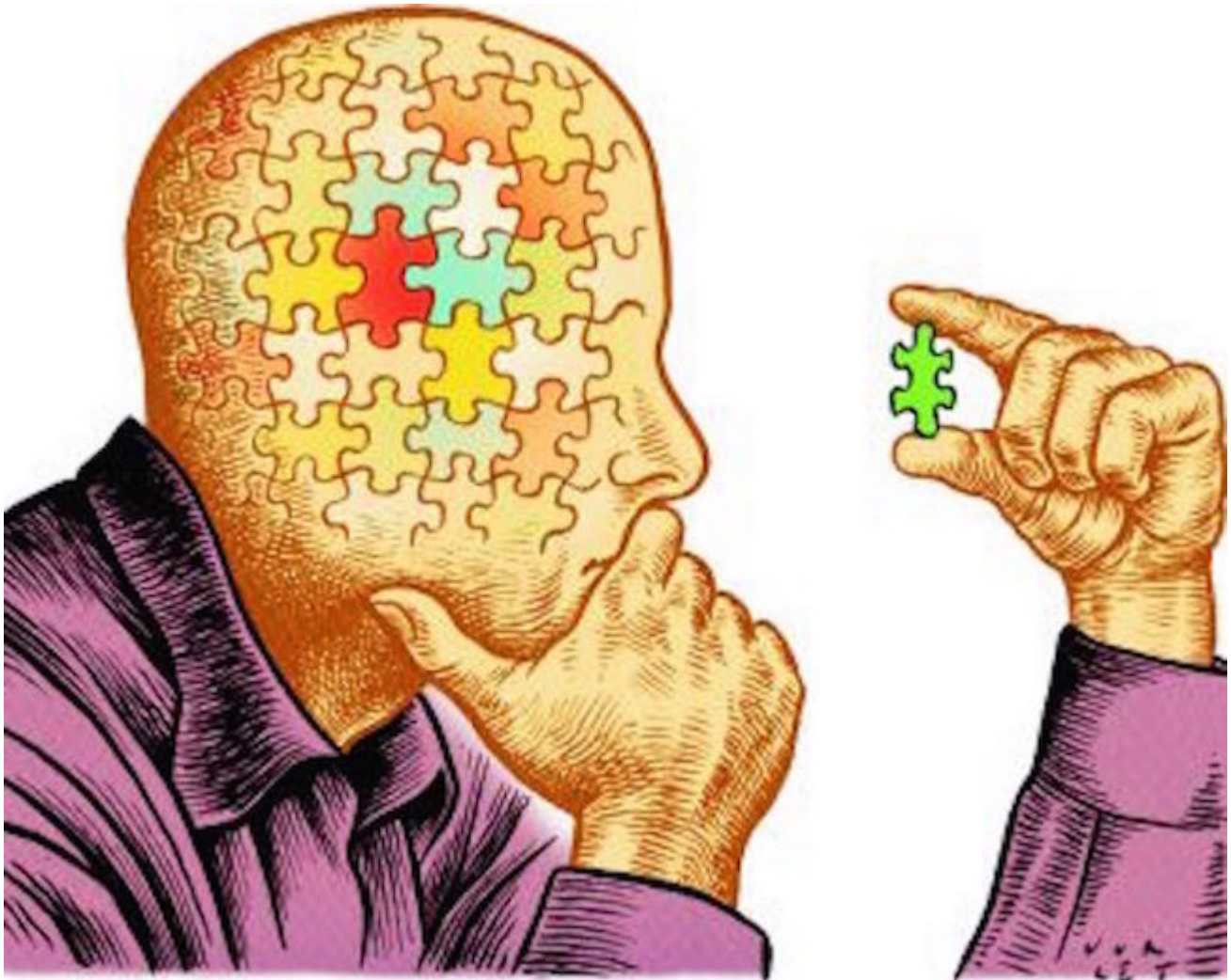
"The happiness that dawns in the eye of the thinking person is the happiness of humanity. The universal tendency of oppression is opposed to thought as such. Thought is happiness, even where it defines unhappiness: by enunciating it. By this alone happiness reaches into the universal unhappiness. Whoever does no let it atrophy has not yet resigned."

Read the full essay here.

Huey Newton: Speech At Boston College

Speech originally given at Boston College on November 18, 1970.

Power to the people, brothers and sisters. I would like to thank you for my presence here tonight because you are responsible for it. I would be in a maximum-security penitentiary if it were not for the power of the people.

Chairman, for Ericka Huggins, for Angela Davis, for the New York 21 and the Soledad Brothers. For all political prisoners and prisoners of war. On the 28th and 29th of November we will have a People's Revolutionary Constitutional convention in Washington, D.C. We cannot have that convention if the people do not come. After all, the people are the makers of world history and responsible for everything.

How can we have a convention if we have no people? Some believe a people's convention is possible without the people being there. As I recall, that was the case in 1777.

Tonight, I would like to outline for you the Black Panther Party's program and explain how we arrived at our ideological position and why we feel it necessary to institute a Ten-Point Program. A Ten-Point Program is not revolutionary in itself, nor is it reformist. It is a survival program. We, the people, are threatened with genocide because racism and fascism are rampant in this country and throughout the world. And the ruling circle in North America is responsible. We intend to change all of that, and in order to change it, there must be a total transformation. But until we can achieve that total transformation, we must exist. In order to exist, we must survive; therefore, we need a survival kit: the Ten-Point Program. It is necessary for our children to grow up healthy with functional and creative minds. They cannot do this if they do not get the correct nutrition. That is why we have a breakfast program for children. We also have community health programs. We have a busing program. We call it "The Bus for Relatives and Parents of Prisoners," We realize that the fascist regime that operates the prisons throughout America would like to do their treachery in the dark. But if we get the relatives, parents, and friends to the prisons they can expose the treachery of the fascists. This too is a survival program.

We must not regard our survival programs as an answer to the whole problem of oppression. We don't even claim it to be a revolutionary program. Revolutions are made of sterner stuff. We do say that if the people are not here revolution cannot be achieved, for the people and only the people make revolutions.

The theme of our Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention is "Survival Through Service to the People." At our convention we will present our total survival program. It is a program that works very much like the first-aid kit that is used when a plane falls and you find yourself in the middle of the sea on a rubber raft. You need a few things to last until you can get to the shore, until you can get to that oasis where you can be happy and healthy. If you do not have the things necessary to get you to that shore, then you will probably not exist. At this time the ruling circle threatens us to the extent that we are afraid that we might not exist to see the next day or see the revolution. The Black Panther Party will not accept the total destruction of the people. As a matter of fact, we have drawn a line of demarcation and we will no longer tolerate fascism, aggression, brutality, and murder of any kind. We will not sit around and allow ourselves to be murdered. Each person has an obligation to preserve himself. If he does not preserve himself then I accuse him of suicide: reactionary suicide because reactionary conditions will have caused his death. If we do nothing we are accepting the situation and allowing ourselves to die. We will not accept that. If the alternatives are very narrow we still will not sit around, we will not die the death of the Jews in Germany. We would rather die the death of the Jews in Warsaw!

Where there is courage, where there is self-respect and dignity, there is a possibility that we can change the conditions and win. This is is a possibility that we can change the conditions and win. This is called revolutionary enthusiasm and it is the kind of struggle that is needed

in order to guarantee a victory. If we must die, then we will die the death of a revolutionary suicide that says, "If I am put down, if I am driven out, I refuse to be swept out with a broom. I would much rather be driven out with a stick because if I am swept out with the broom it will humiliate me and I will lose my self-respect. But if I am driven out with the stick, then, at least, I can claim the dignity of a man and die the death of a man rather than the death of a dog."

Of course, our real desire is to live, but we will not be cowed, we will not be intimidated.

I would like to explain to you the method that the Black Panther Party used to arrive at our ideological position, and more than that, I would like to give to you a framework or a process of thinking that might help us solve the problems and the contradictions that exist today. Before we approach the problem we must get a clear picture of what is really going on; a clear image divorced from the attitudes and emotions that we usually project into a situation. We must be as objective as possible without accepting dogma, letting the facts speak for themselves. But we will not remain totally objective; we will become subjective in the application of the knowledge received from the external world. We will use the scientific method to acquire this knowledge, but we will openly acknowledge our ultimate subjectivity. Once we apply knowledge in order to will a certain outcome our objectivity ends and our subjectivity begins. We call this integrating theory with practice, and this is what the Black Panther Party is all about.

In order to understand a group of forces operating at the same time, science developed what is called the scientific method. One of the characteristics or properties of this method is disinterest. Not uninterest, but disinterest: no special interest in the outcome. In other words, the scientist does not promote an outcome, he just collects the facts. Nevertheless, in acquiring his facts he must begin with a basic premise. Most basic premises stem from a set of assumptions because it is very difficult to test a first premise without these assumptions. After an agreement is reached on certain assumptions, an intelligent argument can follow, for then logic and consistency arc all that is required to reach a valid conclusion.

Tonight I ask you to assume that an external world exists. An external world that exists independently of us. The second assumption I would like for you to make is that things are in a constant state of change, transformation, or flux. With agreement on these two assumptions we can go on with our discussion.

The scientific method relies heavily on empiricism. But the problem with empiricism is that it tells you very little about the future; it tells you only about the past, about information which you have already discovered through observation and experience. It always refers to past experience.

Long after the rules of empirical knowledge had been ascertained, a man by the name of Karl Marx integrated these rules with a theory developed by Immanuel Kant called rationale. Kant called his process of reasoning pure reason because it did not depend on the external world. Instead it only depended on consistency in manipulating symbols in order to come up with a conclusion based upon reason. For example, in this sentence "If the sky is above my head when I turn my head upwards, I will see the sky" there is nothing wrong with the conclusion. As a matter of fact, it is accurate. But I haven't said anything about the existence of the sky. I said "if" With rationale we are not dependent upon the external world. With empiricism we can tell very little about the future. So what will we do? What Marx did. In order to understand what was happening in the world Marx found it necessary to integrate rationale with empiricism. He called his concept dialectical materialism. If, like Marx, we integrate these two concepts or these two ways of thinking, not only are we in touch with the world outside us but we can also explain the constant state of transformation. Therefore, we can also make some predictions about the outcome of certain social phenomena that is not only in constant change but also in conflict.

Marx, as a social scientist, criticized other social scientists for attempting to explain phenomena, or one phenomenon, by taking it out of its environment, isolating it, putting it into a category, and not acknowledging the fact that once it was taken out of its environment the phenomenon was transformed. For example, if in a discipline such as sociology we study the activity of groups - how they hold together and why they fall apart - without understanding everything else related to that group, we may arrive at a false conclusion about the nature of the group. What Marx attempted to do was to develop a way of thinking that would explain phenomena realistically.

When atoms collide, in physics, they divide into electrons, protons, and neutrons, if I remember correctly. What happened to the atom? It was transformed. In the social world a similar thing happens. We can apply the same principle. When two cultures collide a process or condition occurs which the sociologists call acculturation: the modification of cultures as a result of their contact with each other. Marx called the collision of social forces or classes a contradiction. In the physical world, when forces collide we sometimes call it just that – a collision. For example, when two cars meet head on, trying to occupy the same space at the same time, both are transformed. Sometimes other things happen. Had those two cars been turned back to back and sped off in opposite directions they would not be a contradiction; they would be contrary, covering different spaces at different times. Sometimes when people meet they argue and misunderstand each other because they think they are having a contradiction when they are only being contrary. For example, I can say the wall is ten feet tall and you can say the wall is red, and we can argue all day thinking we are having a contradiction when actually we are only being contrary. When people argue, when one offers a thesis and the other offers an anti -thesis, we say there is a contradiction and hope that if we argue long enough, provided that we agree on one premise, we can have some

kind of synthesis. Tonight I hope I can have some form of agreement or synthesis with those who have criticized the Black Panther Party.

I think that the mistake is that some people have taken the apparent as the actual fact in spite of their claims of scholarly research and following the discipline of dialectical materialism. They fail to search deeper, as the scientist is required to do, to get beyond the apparent and come up with the more significant. Let me explain how this relates to the Black Panther Party. The Black Panther Party is a Marxist-Leninist party because we follow the dialectical method and we also integrate theory with practice. We are not mechanical Marxists and we are not historical materialists. Some people think they are Marxists when actually they are following the thoughts of Hegel. Some people think they are Marxist-Leninists but they refuse to be creative, and are, therefore, tied to the past. They are tied to a rhetoric that does not apply to the present set of conditions. They are tied to a set of thoughts that approaches dogma - what we call flunkeyism.

Marx attempted to set up a framework which could be applied to a number of conditions. And in applying this framework we cannot be afraid of the outcome because things change and we must be willing to acknowledge that change because we arc objective. If we are using the method of dialectical materialism we don't expect to find anything the same even one minute later because "one minute later" is history. If things are in a constant state of change, we cannot expect them to be the same. Words used to describe old phenomena may be useless to describe the new. And if we use the old words to describe new events we run the risk of confusing people and misleading them into thinking that things are static.

In 1917 an event occurred in the Soviet Union that was called a revolution. Two classes had a contradiction and the whole country was transformed. In this country, 1970, the Black Panther Party issued a document. Our Minister of Information, Eldridge Cleaver, who now is in Algeria, wrote a pamphlet called "On the Ideology of the Black Panther Party." In that work Eldridge Cleaver stated that neither the proletarians nor the industrial workers carry the potentialities for revolution in this country at this time. He claimed that the left wing of the proletarians, the lumpen proletarians, have that revolutionary potential, and in fact, acting as the vanguard, they would carry the people of the world to the final climax of the transformation of society. It has been stated by some people, by some parties, by some organizations, by the Progressive Labor Party, that revolution is impossible. How can the lumpen proletarians carry out a successful socialist transformation when they are only a minority? And in fact how can they do it when history shows that only the proletarians have carried out a successful social revolution? I agree that it is necessary for the people who carry out a social revolution to represent the popular majority's interests. It is necessary for this group to represent the broad masses of the people. We analyzed what happened in the Soviet Union in 1917. I also agree that the lumpen proletarians are the minority in this country. No disagreement. Have I contradicted myself? It only goes to show that what's

apparent might not actually be a fact. What appears to be a contradiction may be only a paradox. Let's examine this apparent contradiction.

The Soviet Union, in 1917, was basically an agricultural society with very large peasantry. A set of social conditions existing there at that time was responsible for the development of a small industrial base. The people who worked in this industrial base were called proletarians. Lenin, using Marx's theory, saw the trends. He was not a historical materialist, but a dialectical materialist, and therefore very interested in the ever-changing status of things. He saw that while the proletarians were a minority in 1917, they had the potential to carry out a revolution because their class was increasing and the peasantry was declining. That was one of the conditions. The proletarians were destined to be a popular force. They also had access to the properties necessary for carrying out a socialist revolution.

In this country the Black Panther Party, taking careful note of the dialectical method, taking careful note of the social trends and the ever-changing nature of things, sees that while the lumpen proletarians are the minority and the proletarians are the majority, technology is developing at such a rapid rate that automation will progress to cybernation, and cybernation probably to technocracy. As I came into town I saw MIT over the way. If the ruling circle remains in power it seems to me that capitalists will continue to develop their technological machinery because they are not interested in the people. Therefore, I expect from them the logic that they have always followed: to make as much money as possible, and pay the people as little as possible - until the people demand more, and finally demand their heads. If revolution does not occur almost immediately, and I say almost immediately because technology is making leaps (it made a leap all the way to the moon), and if the ruling circle remains in power the proletarian working class will definitely be on the decline because they will be unemployables and therefore swell the ranks of the lumpens, who are the present unemployables. Every worker is in jeopardy because of the ruling circle, which is why we say that the lumpen proletarians have the potential for revolution, will probably carry out the revolution, and in the near future will be the popular majority. Of course, I would not like to see more of my people unemployed or become unemployables, but being objective, because we're dialectical materialists, we must acknowledge the facts.

Marx outlined a rough process of the development of society. He said that society goes from a slave class to a feudalistic class structure to a capitalistic class structure to a socialistic class structure and finally to communism. Or in other words, from capitalist state to socialist state to nonstate: communism. I think we can all agree that the slave class in the world has virtually been transformed into the wage slave. In other words, the slave class in the world no longer exists as a significant force, and if we agree to that we can agree that classes can be transformed literally out of existence. If this is so, if the slave class can disappear and become something else - or not disappear but just be transformed - and take on other characteristics, then it is also true that the proletarians or the industrial working class can

possibly be transformed out of existence. Of course the people themselves would not disappear; they would only take on other attributes. The attribute that I am interested in is the fact that soon the ruling circle will not need the workers, and if the ruling circle is in control of the means of production the working class will become unemployables or lumpens. That is logical; that is dialectical. I think it would be wrong to say that only the slave class could disappear.

Marx was a very intelligent man. He was not a dogmatist. Once he said, "One thing I'm not, I'm not a Marxist." In those words, he was trying to tell the Progressive Labor Party and others not to accept the past as the present or the future, but to understand it and be able to predict what might happen in the future and therefore act in an intelligent way to bring about the revolution that we all want.

After taking those things into consideration we see that as time changes and the world is transformed we need some new definitions, for if we keep using the old terms people might think the old situation still exists. I would be amazed if the same conditions that existed in 1917 were still existing today.

You know Marx and Lenin were pretty lazy dudes when it came to working for somebody. They looked at toil, working for your necessities, as something of a curse. And Lenin's whole theory, after he put Marx's analysis into practice, was geared to get rid of the proletarians. In other words, when the proletarian class or the working class seized the means of production, they would plan their society in such a way as to be free from toil. As a matter of fact, Lenin saw a time in which man could stand in one place, push buttons and move mountains. It sounds to me as though he saw a proletarian working class transformed and in possession of a free block of time, to indulge in productive creativity, to think about developing their universe, so that they could have the happiness, the freedom, and the pleasure that all men seek and value.

Today's capitalist has developed machinery to such a point that he can hire a group of specialized people called technocrats. In the near future he will certainly do more of this, and the technocrat will be too specialized to be identified as a proletarian. In fact that group of technocrats will be so vital we will have to do something to explain the presence of other people; we will have to come up with another definition and reason for existing.

But we must not confine our discussion to theory; we must have practical application of our theory to come up with anything worthwhile. In spite of the criticism that we have received from certain people, the Party has a practical application of its theories. Many of our activities provide the working class and the unemployed with a reason and a means for existing in the future. The people will not disappear-not with our survival programs they will not. They will still be around.

The Black Panther Party says it is perfectly correct to organize the proletarians because after they are kicked out of the factory and are called unemployable or lumpen, they still want to live, and in order to live they have to eat. It is in the proletarian's own best interest to seize the machinery that he has made in order to produce in abundance, so he and his brethren can live. We will not wait until the proletarian becomes the lumpen proletarian to educate him. Today we must lift the consciousness of the people. The wind is rising and the rivers flowing, times are getting hard and we can't go home again. We can't go back to our mother's womb, nor can we go back to 1917.

The United States, or what I like to call North America, was transformed at the hands of the ruling circle from a nation to an empire. This caused a total change in the world, because no part of an interrelated thing can change and leave everything else the same. So when the United States, or North America, became an empire it changed the whole composition of the world. There were other nations in the world. But "empire" means that the ruling circle who lives in the empire (the imperialists) control other nations. Now some time ago there existed a phenomenon we called-well, I call - primitive empire. An example of that would be the Roman Empire because the Romans controlled all of what was thought to be the known world. In fact they did not know all of the world, therefore some nations still existed independent of it. Now, probably all of the world is known. The United States as an empire necessarily controls the whole world either directly or indirectly.

If we understand dialectics we know that every determination brings about a limitation and every limitation brings about a determination. In other words, while one force may give rise to one thing it might crush other things, including itself. We might call this concept "the negation of the negation." So, while in 1917 the ruling circle created an industrial base and used the system of capitalism they were also creating the necessary conditions for socialism. They were doing this because in a socialist society it is necessary to have some centralization of the wealth, some equal distribution of the wealth, and some harmony among the people.

Now, I will give you roughly some characteristics that any people who call themselves a nation should have. These are economic independence, cultural determination, control of the political institutions, territorial integrity, and safety.

In 1966 we called our Party a Black Nationalist Party. We called ourselves Black Nationalists because we thought that nationhood was the answer. Shortly after that we decided that what was really needed was revolutionary nationalism, that is, nationalism plus socialism. After analyzing conditions a little more, we found that it was impractical and even contradictory. Therefore, we went to a higher level of consciousness. We saw that in order to be free we had to crush the ruling circle and therefore we had to unite with the peoples of the world. So we called ourselves Internationalists. We sought solidarity with the peoples

of the world. We sought solidarity with what we thought were the nations of the world. But then what happened? We found that because everything is in a constant state of transformation, because of the development of technology, because of the development of the mass media, because of the fire power of the imperialist, and because of the fact that the United States is no longer a nation but an empire, nations could not exist, for they did not have the criteria for nationhood. Their self- determination, economic determination, and cultural determination has been transformed by the imperialists and the ruling circle. They were no longer nations. We found that in order to be Internationalists we had to be also Nationalists, or at least acknowledge nationhood. Internationalism, if I understand the word, means the interrelationship among a group of nations. But since no nation exists, and since the United States is in fact an empire, it is impossible for us to be Internationalists.

These transformations and phenomena require us to call ourselves "intercommunalists" because nations have been transformed into communities of the world. The Black Panther Party now disclaims internationalism and supports intercommunalism.

Marx and Lenin felt, with the information they had, that when the non-state finally came to be a reality, it would be caused or ushered in by the people and by communism. A strange thing happened. The ruling reactionary circle, through the consequence of being imperialists, transformed the world into what we call "Reactionary Intercommunalism." They laid siege upon all the communities of the world, dominating the institutions to such an extent that the people were not served by the institutions in their own land. The Black Panther Party would like to reverse that trend and lead the people of the world into the age of "Revolutionary Intercommunalism."This would be the time when the people seize the means of production and distribute the wealth and the technology in an egalitarian way to the many communities of the world.

We see very little difference in what happens to a community here in North America and what happens to a community in Vietnam. We see very little difference in what happens, even culturally, to a Chinese community in San Francisco and a Chinese community in Hong Kong. We see very little difference in what happens to a Black community in Harlem and a Black community in South America, a Black community in Angola and one in Mozambique. We see very little difference.

So, what has actually happened, is that the non-state has already been accomplished, but it is reactionary. A community by way of definition is a comprehensive collection of institutions that serve the people who live there. It differs from a nation because a community evolves around a greater structure that we usually call the state, and the state has certain control over the community if the administration represents the people or if the administration happens to be the people's commissar. It is not so at this time, so there's still something to be done. I mentioned earlier the "negation of the negation," I mentioned earlier the

necessity for the redistribution of wealth. We think that it is very important to know that as things are in the world today socialism in the United States will never exist. Why? It will not exist because it cannot exist. It cannot at this time exist anyplace in the world. Socialism would require a socialist state, and if a state does not exist how could socialism exist? So how do we define certain progressive countries such as the People's Republic of China? How do we describe certain progressive countries, or communities as we call them, as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea?

How do we define certain communities such as North Vietnam and the provisional government in the South? How do we explain these communities if in fact they too cannot claim nationhood? We say this: we say they represent the people's liberated territory. They represent a community liberated. But that community is not sufficient, it is not satisfied, just as the National Liberation Front is not satisfied with the liberated territory in the South. It is only the groundwork and preparation for the liberation of the world-seizing the wealth from the ruling circle, equal distribution and proportional representation in an intercommunal framework. This is what the Black Panther Party would like to achieve with the help of the power of the people, because without the people nothing can be achieved.

I stated that in the United States socialism would never exist. In order for a revolution to occur in the United States you would have to have a redistribution of wealth not on a national or an international level, but on an intercommunal level. Because how can we say that we have accomplished revolution if we redistribute the wealth just to the people here in North America when the ruling circle itself is guilty of trespass de bonis asportatis. That is, they have taken away the goods of the people of the world, transported them to America and used them as their very own.

In 1917, when the revolution occurred, there could be a redistribution of wealth on a national level because nations existed. Now, if you talk in terms of planning an economy on a world-wide level, on an intercommunal level, you are saying something important: that the people have been ripped off very much like one country being ripped off. Simple reparation is not enough because the people have not only been robbed of their raw materials, but of the wealth accrued from the investment of those materials-an investment which has created the technological machine. The people of the world will have to have control - not a limited share of control for "X" amount of time, but total control forever.

In order to plan a real intercommunal economy we will have to acknowledge how the world is hooked up. We will also have to acknowledge that nations have not existed for some time. Some people will argue that nations still exist because of the cultural differences. By way of definition, just for practical argument, culture is a collection of learned patterns of behavior. Here in the United States Black people, Africans, were raped from the mother country, and consequently we have literally lost most of our African values. Perhaps we still hold on to

some surviving Africanisms, but by and large you can see the transformation which was achieved by time and the highly technological society whose tremendous mass media functions as an indoctrination center. The ruling circle has launched satellites in order to project a beam across the earth and indoctrinate the world, and while there might be some cultural differences, these differences are not qualitative but quantitative. In other words, if technology and the ruling circle go on as they are now the people of the world will be conditioned to adopt Western values. (I think Japan is a good example.) The differences between people are getting very small, but again that is in the interest of the ruling circle. I do not believe that history can be backtracked. If the world is really that interconnected then we have to acknowledge that and say that in order for the people to be free, they will have to control the institutions of their community, and have some form of representation in the technological center that they have produced. The United States, in order to correct its robbery of the world, will have to first return much of which it has stolen. I don't see how we can talk about socialism when the problem is world distribution. I think this is what Marx meant when he talked about the non-state.

I was at Alex Haley's house some time ago and he talked to me about his search for his past. He found it in Africa but when he returned there shortly afterward, he was in a state of panic. His village hadn't changed very much, but when he went there he saw an old man walking down the road, holding something that he cherished to his car. It was a small transistor radio that was zeroed in on the British broadcasting network. What I'm trying to say is that mass media plus the development of transportation make it impossible for us to think of ourselves in terms of separate entities, as nations. Do you realize that it only took me approximately five hours to get from San Francisco to here? It only takes ten hours to get from here to Vietnam. The ruling circle no longer even acknowledges wars; they call them "police actions." They call the riots of the Vietnamese people "domestic disturbance." What I am saying is that the ruling circle must realize and accept the consequences of what they have done. They know that there is only one world, but they are determined to follow the logic of their exploitation.

A short time ago in Detroit, the community was under siege, and now sixteen members of the Party arc in prison. The local police laid siege on that community and that house, and they used the same weapons they use in Vietnam (as a matter of fact, two tanks rolled up). The same thing happens in Vietnam because the "police" are there also. The "police" are everywhere and they all wear the same uniform and use the same tools, and have the same purpose: the protection of the ruling circle here in North America. It is true that the world is one community, but we are not satisfied with the concentration of its power. We want the power for the people.

I said earlier (but I strayed away) that the theory of the "negation of the negation" is valid. Some scholars have been wondering why in Asia, Africa, and Latin America the resistance

always seeks the goal of a collective society. They seem not to institute the economy of the capitalist. They seem to jump all the way from feudalism to a collective society, and some people can't understand why. Why won't they follow historical Marxism, or historical materialism? Why won't they go from feudalism to the development of a capitalistic base and finally to socialism? They don't do it because they can't do it. They don't do it for the same reason that the Black community in Harlem cannot develop capitalism, that the Black community in Oakland or San Francisco cannot develop capitalism, because the imperialists have already pre-empted the field. They have already centralized the wealth. Therefore, in order to deal with them all we can do is liberate our community and then move on them as a collective force.

We've had long arguments with people about our convictions. Before we became conscious we used to call ourselves a dispersed collection of colonies here in North America. And people argued with me all day and all night, asking, "How can you possibly be a colony? In order to be a colony you have to have a nation, and you're not a nation, you're a community. You're a dispersed collection of communities." Because the Black Panther Party is not embarrassed to change or admit error, tonight I would like to accept the criticism and say that those critics were absolutely right. We are a collection of communities just as the Korean people, the Vietnamese people, and the Chinese people arc a collection of communities-a dispersed collection of communities because we have no superstructure of our own. The superstructure we have is the superstructure of Wall Street, which all of our labor produced. This is a distorted form of collectivity. Everything's been collected but it's used exclusively in the interest of the ruling circle. This is why the Black Panther Party denounces Black capitalism and says that all we can do is liberate our community, not only in Vietnam but here, not only in Cambodia and the People's Republics of China and Korea but the communities of the world. We must unite as one community and then transform the world into a place where people will be happy, wars will end, the state itself will no longer exist, and we will have communism. But we cannot do this right away. When transformation takes place, when structural change takes place, the result is usually cultural lag. After the people possess the means of production we will probably not move directly into communism but linger with Revolutionary Intercommunalism until such time as we can wash away bourgeois thought, until such time as we can wash away racism and reactionary thinking, until such time as people are not attached to their nation as a peasant is attached to the soil, until such time as that people can gain their sanity and develop a culture that is "essentially human," that will serve the people instead of some god. Because we cannot avoid contact with each other we will have to develop a value system that will help us function together in harmony.

Eric Draitser: A Crisis In Black Politics? A Conversation With Pascal Robert

Originally published on stopimperialism.org on March 29, 2017.

"Eric Draitser sits down with political commentator Pascal Robert to discuss what he describes as the crisis of Black politics in America. Eric and Pascal examine the legacy of Obama on Black politics, and how that legacy negatively impacts Black America in the Age of Trump. This and so much more in this in depth conversation." Listen to the full conversation below.

Eric Cheyfitz: The Disinformation Age

"My meaning of disinformation is a real historical break in political discourse so that what begins to happen – and it is reflexive rather than conscious or planned by any particular entity – is that another history starts to emerge which itself is detached from actual history. That [detached] history takes hold and becomes the status quo in a particular nation state… What ultimately happens is that there is no longer a political vocabulary to deal with political realities, so consequently, problems can't be solved. And the status quo, which is increasingly an unequal status quo, is exacerbated. And that's where we are. We have intense income inequality in this country [the U.S] that is not being dealt with; we have endless war in this country that is not being dealt with, and we have absolutely no language to address these issues."

Listen to the full interview below.

David Graeber: Of Flying Cars and the Declining Rate of Profit

This article was originally published in The Baffler.

MARK FISHER
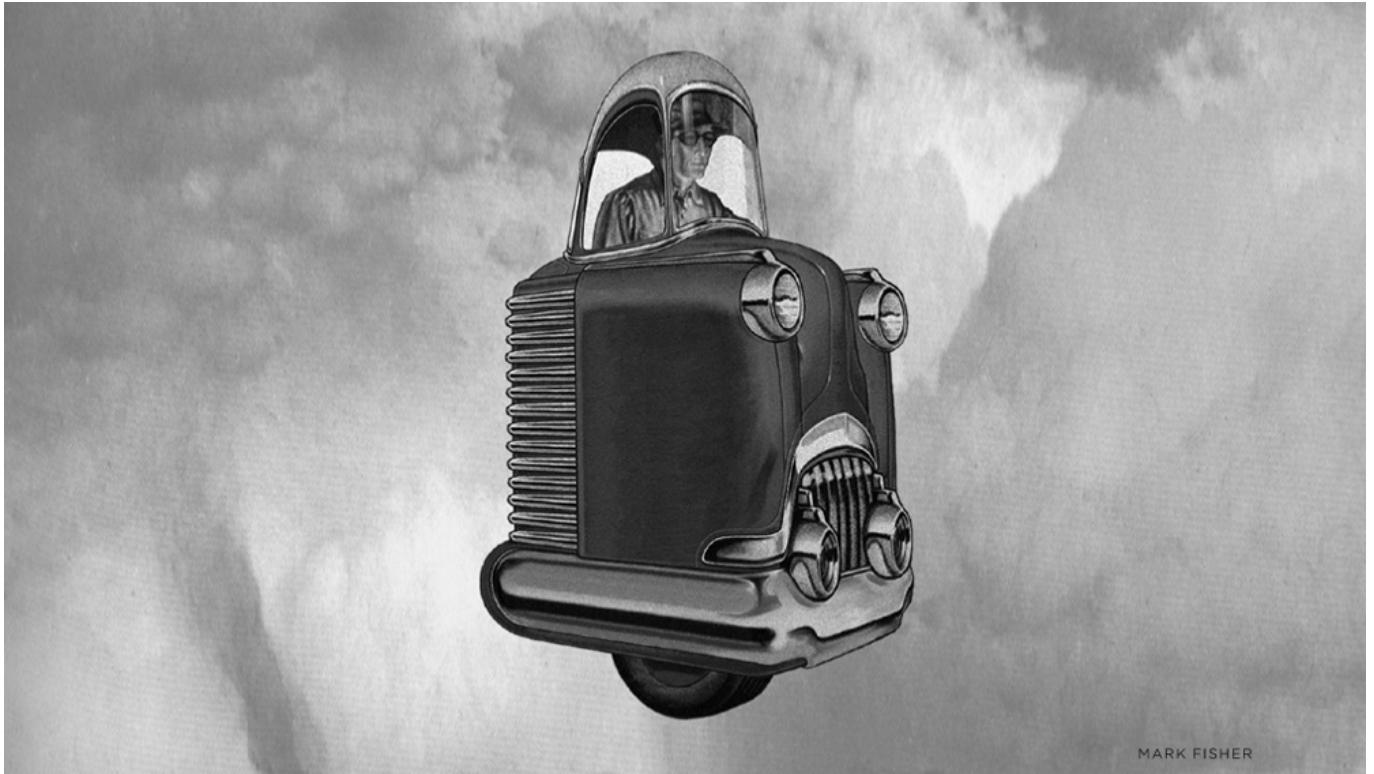
A secret question hovers over us, a sense of disappointment, a broken promise we were given as children about what our adult world was supposed to be like. I am referring not to the standard false promises that children are always given (about how the world is fair, or how those who work hard shall be rewarded), but to a particular generational promise—given to those who were children in the fifties, sixties, seventies, or eighties—one that was never quite articulated as a promise but rather as a set of assumptions about what our adult world would be like. And since it was never quite promised, now that it has failed to come true, we're left confused: indignant, but at the same time, embarrassed at our own indignation, ashamed we were ever so silly to believe our elders to begin with.

Where, in short, are the flying cars? Where are the force fields, tractor beams, teleportation pods, antigravity sleds, tricorders, immortality drugs, colonies on Mars, and all the other technological wonders any child growing up in the mid-to-late twentieth century assumed would exist by now? Even those inventions that seemed ready to emerge—like cloning or cryogenics—ended up betraying their lofty promises. What happened to them?

We are well informed of the wonders of computers, as if this is some sort of unanticipated compensation, but, in fact, we haven't moved even computing to the point of progress that people in the fifties expected we'd have reached by now. We don't have computers we can have an interesting conversation with, or robots that can walk our dogs or take our clothes to the Laundromat.

As someone who was eight years old at the time of the Apollo moon landing, I remember calculating that I would be thirty-nine in the magic year 2000 and wondering what the world

would be like. Did I expect I would be living in such a world of wonders? Of course. Everyone did. Do I feel cheated now? It seemed unlikely that I'd live to see all the things I was reading about in science fiction, but it never occurred to me that I wouldn't see any of them.

At the turn of the millennium, I was expecting an outpouring of reflections on why we had gotten the future of technology so wrong. Instead, just about all the authoritative voices—both Left and Right—began their reflections from the assumption that we do live in an unprecedented new technological utopia of one sort or another.

The common way of dealing with the uneasy sense that this might not be so is to brush it aside, to insist all the progress that could have happened has happened and to treat anything more as silly. "Oh, you mean all that Jetsons stuff?" I'm asked—as if to say, but that was just for children! Surely, as grown-ups, we understand The Jetsons offered as accurate a view of the future as The Flintstones offered of the Stone Age.

Surely, as grown-ups, we understand The Jetsons offered as accurate a view of the future as The Flintstones did of the Stone Age.

Even in the seventies and eighties, in fact, sober sources such as National Geographic and the Smithsonian were informing children of imminent space stations and expeditions to Mars. Creators of science fiction movies used to come up with concrete dates, often no more than a generation in the future, in which to place their futuristic fantasies. In 1968, Stanley Kubrick felt that a moviegoing audience would find it perfectly natural to assume that only thirty-three years later, in 2001, we would have commercial moon flights, city-like space stations, and computers with human personalities maintaining astronauts in suspended animation while traveling to Jupiter. Video telephony is just about the only new technology from that particular movie that has appeared—and it was technically possible when the movie was showing. 2001 can be seen as a curio, but what about Star Trek? The Star Trek mythos was set in the sixties, too, but the show kept getting revived, leaving audiences for Star Trek Voyager in, say, 2005, to try to figure out what to make of the fact that according to the logic of the program, the world was supposed to be recovering from fighting off the rule of genetically engineered supermen in the Eugenics Wars of the nineties.

By 1989, when the creators of Back to the Future II were dutifully placing flying cars and anti-gravity hoverboards in the hands of ordinary teenagers in the year 2015, it wasn't clear if this was meant as a prediction or a joke.

The usual move in science fiction is to remain vague about the dates, so as to render "the future" a zone of pure fantasy, no different than Middle Earth or Narnia, or like Star Wars, "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away." As a result, our science fiction future is, most

often, not a future at all, but more like an alternative dimension, a dream-time, a technological Elsewhere, existing in days to come in the same sense that elves and dragon-slayers existed in the past—another screen for the displacement of moral dramas and mythic fantasies into the dead ends of consumer pleasure.

Might the cultural sensibility that came to be referred to as postmodernism best be seen as a prolonged meditation on all the technological changes that never happened? The question struck me as I watched one of the recent Star Wars movies. The movie was terrible, but I couldn't help but feel impressed by the quality of the special effects. Recalling the clumsy special effects typical of fifties sci-fi films, I kept thinking how impressed a fifties audience would have been if they'd known what we could do by now—only to realize, "Actually, no. They wouldn't be impressed at all, would they? They thought we'd be doing this kind of thing by now. Not just figuring out more sophisticated ways to simulate it."

That last word—simulate—is key. The technologies that have advanced since the seventies are mainly either medical technologies or information technologies—largely, technologies of simulation. They are technologies of what Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco called the "hyper-real," the ability to make imitations that are more realistic than originals. The postmodern sensibility, the feeling that we had somehow broken into an unprecedented new historical period in which we understood that there is nothing new; that grand historical narratives of progress and liberation were meaningless; that everything now was simulation, ironic repetition, fragmentation, and pastiche—all this makes sense in a technological environment in which the only breakthroughs were those that made it easier to create, transfer, and rearrange virtual projections of things that either already existed, or, we came to realize, never would. Surely, if we were vacationing in geodesic domes on Mars or toting about pocket-size nuclear fusion plants or telekinetic mind-reading devices no one would ever have been talking like this. The postmodern moment was a desperate way to take what could otherwise only be felt as a bitter disappointment and to dress it up as something epochal, exciting, and new.

In the earliest formulations, which largely came out of the Marxist tradition, a lot of this technological background was acknowledged. Fredric Jameson's "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" proposed the term "postmodernism" to refer to the cultural logic appropriate to a new, technological phase of capitalism, one that had been

heralded by Marxist economist Ernest Mandel as early as 1972. Mandel had argued that humanity stood at the verge of a "third technological revolution," as profound as the Agricultural or Industrial Revolution, in which computers, robots, new energy sources, and new information technologies would replace industrial labor—the "end of work" as it soon came to be called—reducing us all to designers and computer technicians coming up with crazy visions that cybernetic factories would produce.

End of work arguments were popular in the late seventies and early eighties as social thinkers pondered what would happen to the traditional working-class-led popular struggle once the working class no longer existed. (The answer: it would turn into identity politics.) Jameson thought of himself as exploring the forms of consciousness and historical sensibilities likely to emerge from this new age.

What happened, instead, is that the spread of information technologies and new ways of organizing transport—the containerization of shipping, for example—allowed those same industrial jobs to be outsourced to East Asia, Latin America, and other countries where the availability of cheap labor allowed manufacturers to employ much less technologically sophisticated production-line techniques than they would have been obliged to employ at home.

From the perspective of those living in Europe, North America, and Japan, the results did seem to be much as predicted. Smokestack industries did disappear; jobs came to be divided between a lower stratum of service workers and an upper stratum sitting in antiseptic bubbles playing with computers. But below it all lay an uneasy awareness that the postwork civilization was a giant fraud. Our carefully engineered high-tech sneakers were not being produced by intelligent cyborgs or self-replicating molecular nanotechnology; they were being made on the equivalent of old-fashioned Singer sewing machines, by the daughters of Mexican and Indonesian farmers who, as the result of WTO or NAFTA–sponsored trade deals, had been ousted from their ancestral lands. It was a guilty awareness that lay beneath the postmodern sensibility and its celebration of the endless play of images and surfaces.

BILL LEWIS

Why did the projected explosion of technological growth everyone was expecting—the moon bases, the robot factories—fail to happen? There are two possibilities. Either our expectations about the pace of technological change were unrealistic (in which case, we need to know why so many intelligent people believed they were not) or our expectations were not unrealistic (in which case, we need to know what happened to derail so many credible ideas and prospects).

Most social analysts choose the first explanation and trace the problem to the Cold War space race. Why, these analysts wonder, did both the United States and the Soviet Union become so obsessed with the idea of manned space travel? It was never an efficient way to engage in scientific research. And it encouraged unrealistic ideas of what the human future would be like.

Could the answer be that both the United States and the Soviet Union had been, in the century before, societies of pioneers, one expanding across the Western frontier, the other across Siberia? Didn't they share a commitment to the myth of a limitless, expansive future, of human colonization of vast empty spaces, that helped convince the leaders of both superpowers they had entered into a "space age" in which they were battling over control of the future itself? All sorts of myths were at play here, no doubt, but that proves nothing about the feasibility of the project.

Some of those science fiction fantasies (at this point we can't know which ones) could have been brought into being. For earlier generations, many science fiction fantasies had been brought into being. Those who grew up at the turn of the century reading Jules Verne or H.G. Wells imagined the world of, say, 1960 with flying machines, rocket ships, submarines, radio, and television—and that was pretty much what they got. If it wasn't unrealistic in 1900 to dream of men traveling to the moon, then why was it unrealistic in the sixties to dream of jet-packs and robot laundry-maids?

In fact, even as those dreams were being outlined, the material base for their achievement was beginning to be whittled away. There is reason to believe that even by the fifties and sixties, the pace of technological innovation was slowing down from the heady pace of the first half of the century. There was a last spate in the fifties when microwave ovens (1954), the Pill (1957), and lasers (1958) all appeared in rapid succession. But since then, technological advances have taken the form of clever new ways of combining existing technologies (as in the space race) and new ways of putting existing technologies to consumer use (the most famous example is television, invented in 1926, but mass produced only after the war.) Yet, in part because the space race gave everyone the impression that remarkable advances were happening, the popular impression during the sixties was that the pace of technological change was speeding up in terrifying, uncontrollable ways.

Alvin Toffler's 1970 best seller Future Shock argued that almost all the social problems of the sixties could be traced back to the increasing pace of technological change. The endless outpouring of scientific breakthroughs transformed the grounds of daily existence, and left Americans without any clear idea of what normal life was. Just consider the family, where not just the Pill, but also the prospect of in vitro fertilization, test tube babies, and sperm and egg donation were about to make the idea of motherhood obsolete.

Humans were not psychologically prepared for the pace of change, Toffler wrote. He coined a term for the phenomenon: "accelerative thrust." It had begun with the Industrial Revolution, but by roughly 1850, the effect had become unmistakable. Not only was everything around us changing, but most of it—human knowledge, the size of the population, industrial growth, energy use—was changing exponentially. The only solution, Toffler argued, was to begin some kind of control over the process, to create institutions that would assess emerging technologies and their likely effects, to ban technologies likely to be too socially disruptive, and to guide development in the direction of social harmony.

While many of the historical trends Toffler describes are accurate, the book appeared when most of these exponential trends halted. It was right around 1970 when the increase in the number of scientific papers published in the world—a figure that had doubled every fifteen years since, roughly, 1685—began leveling off. The same was true of books and patents.

Toffler's use of acceleration was particularly unfortunate. For most of human history, the top speed at which human beings could travel had been around 25 miles per hour. By 1900 it had increased to 100 miles per hour, and for the next seventy years it did seem to be increasing exponentially. By the time Toffler was writing, in 1970, the record for the fastest speed at which any human had traveled stood at roughly 25,000 mph, achieved by the crew of Apollo 10 in 1969, just one year before. At such an exponential rate, it must have seemed reasonable to assume that within a matter of decades, humanity would be exploring other solar systems.

Since 1970, no further increase has occurred. The record for the fastest a human has ever traveled remains with the crew of Apollo 10. True, the commercial airliner Concorde, which first flew in 1969, reached a maximum speed of 1,400 mph. And the Soviet Tupolev Tu-144, which flew first, reached an even faster speed of 1,553 mph. But those speeds not only have failed to increase; they have decreased since the Tupolev Tu-144 was cancelled and the Concorde was abandoned.

None of this stopped Toffler's own career. He kept retooling his analysis to come up with new spectacular pronouncements. In 1980, he produced The Third Wave, its argument lifted from Ernest Mandel's "third technological revolution"—except that while Mandel thought these changes would spell the end of capitalism, Toffler assumed capitalism was eternal. By 1990, Toffler was the personal intellectual guru to Republican congressman Newt Gingrich, who claimed that his 1994 "Contract With America" was inspired, in part, by the understanding that the United States needed to move from an antiquated, materialist, industrial mind-set to a new, free-market, information age, Third Wave civilization.

There are all sorts of ironies in this connection. One of Toffler's greatest achievements was inspiring the government to create an Office of Technology Assessment (OTA). One of Gingrich's first acts on winning control of the House of Representatives in 1995 was defunding the OTA as an example of useless government extravagance. Still, there's no contradiction here. By this time, Toffler had long since given up on influencing policy by appealing to the general public; he was making a living largely by giving seminars to CEOs and corporate think tanks. His insights had been privatized.

Gingrich liked to call himself a "conservative futurologist." This, too, might seem oxymoronic; but, in fact, Toffler's own conception of futurology was never progressive. Progress was always presented as a problem that needed to be solved.

Toffler might best be seen as a lightweight version of the nineteenth-century social theorist Auguste Comte, who believed that he was standing on the brink of a new age—in his case, the Industrial Age—driven by the inexorable progress of technology, and that the social cataclysms of his times were caused by the social system not adjusting. The older feudal order had developed Catholic theology, a way of thinking about man's place in the cosmos perfectly suited to the social system of the time, as well as an institutional structure, the Church, that conveyed and enforced such ideas in a way that could give everyone a sense of meaning and belonging. The Industrial Age had developed its own system of ideas—science—but scientists had not succeeded in creating anything like the Catholic Church. Comte concluded that we needed to develop a new science, which he dubbed "sociology," and said that sociologists should play the role of priests in a new Religion of Society that would inspire everyone with a love of order, community, work discipline, and family values. Toffler was less ambitious; his futurologists were not supposed to play the

role of priests.

Gingrich had a second guru, a libertarian theologian named George Gilder, and Gilder, like Toffler, was obsessed with technology and social change. In an odd way, Gilder was more optimistic. Embracing a radical version of Mandel's Third Wave argument, he insisted that what we were seeing with the rise of computers was an "overthrow of matter." The old, materialist Industrial Society, where value came from physical labor, was giving way to an Information Age where value emerges directly from the minds of entrepreneurs, just as the world had originally appeared ex nihilo from the mind of God, just as money, in a proper supply-side economy, emerged ex nihilo from the Federal Reserve and into the hands of value-creating capitalists. Supply-side economic policies, Gilder concluded, would ensure that investment would continue to steer away from old government boondoggles like the space program and toward more productive information and medical technologies.

But if there was a conscious, or semi-conscious, move away from investment in research that might lead to better rockets and robots, and toward research that would lead to such things as laser printers and CAT scans, it had begun well before Toffler's Future Shock (1970) and Gilder's Wealth and Poverty (1981). What their success shows is that the issues they raised—that existing patterns of technological development would lead to social upheaval, and that we needed to guide technological development in directions that did not challenge existing structures of authority—echoed in the corridors of power. Statesmen and captains of industry had been thinking about such questions for some time.

BILL LEWIS

Industrial capitalism has fostered an extremely rapid rate of scientific advance and technological innovation—one with no parallel in previous human history. Even capitalism's greatest detractors, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, celebrated its unleashing of the "productive forces." Marx and Engels also believed that capitalism's continual need to revolutionize the means of industrial production would be its undoing. Marx argued that, for

certain technical reasons, value—and therefore profits—can be extracted only from human labor. Competition forces factory owners to mechanize production, to reduce labor costs, but while this is to the short-term advantage of the firm, mechanization's effect is to drive down the general rate of profit.

For 150 years, economists have debated whether all this is true. But if it is true, then the decision by industrialists not to pour research funds into the invention of the robot factories that everyone was anticipating in the sixties, and instead to relocate their factories to labor-intensive, low-tech facilities in China or the Global South makes a great deal of sense.

As I've noted, there's reason to believe the pace of technological innovation in productive processes—the factories themselves—began to slow in the fifties and sixties, but the side effects of America's rivalry with the Soviet Union made innovation appear to accelerate. There was the awesome space race, alongside frenetic efforts by U.S. industrial planners to apply existing technologies to consumer purposes, to create an optimistic sense of burgeoning prosperity and guaranteed progress that would undercut the appeal of working-class politics.

These moves were reactions to initiatives from the Soviet Union. But this part of the history is difficult for Americans to remember, because at the end of the Cold War, the popular image of the Soviet Union switched from terrifyingly bold rival to pathetic basket case—the exemplar of a society that could not work. Back in the fifties, in fact, many United States planners suspected the Soviet system worked better. Certainly, they recalled the fact that in the thirties, while the United States had been mired in depression, the Soviet Union had maintained almost unprecedented economic growth rates of 10 percent to 12 percent a year—an achievement quickly followed by the production of tank armies that defeated Nazi Germany, then by the launching of Sputnik in 1957, then by the first manned spacecraft, the Vostok, in 1961.

It's often said the Apollo moon landing was the greatest historical achievement of Soviet communism. Surely, the United States would never have contemplated such a feat had it not been for the cosmic ambitions of the Soviet Politburo. We are used to thinking of the Politburo as a group of unimaginative gray bureaucrats, but they were bureaucrats who dared to dream astounding dreams. The dream of world revolution was only the first. It's also true that most of them—changing the course of mighty rivers, this sort of thing—either turned out to be ecologically and socially disastrous, or, like Joseph Stalin's one-hundred-story Palace of the Soviets or a twenty-story statue of Vladimir Lenin, never got off the ground.

After the initial successes of the Soviet space program, few of these schemes were realized, but the leadership never ceased coming up with new ones. Even in the eighties, when the

United States was attempting its own last, grandiose scheme, Star Wars, the Soviets were planning to transform the world through creative uses of technology. Few outside of Russia remember most of these projects, but great resources were devoted to them. It's also worth noting that unlike the Star Wars project, which was designed to sink the Soviet Union, most were not military in nature: as, for instance, the attempt to solve the world hunger problem by harvesting lakes and oceans with an edible bacteria called spirulina, or to solve the world energy problem by launching hundreds of gigantic solar-power platforms into orbit and beaming the electricity back to earth.

The American victory in the space race meant that, after 1968, U.S. planners no longer took the competition seriously. As a result, the mythology of the final frontier was maintained, even as the direction of research and development shifted away from anything that might lead to the creation of Mars bases and robot factories.

The standard line is that all this was a result of the triumph of the market. The Apollo program was a Big Government project, Soviet-inspired in the sense that it required a national effort coordinated by government bureaucracies. As soon as the Soviet threat drew safely out of the picture, though, capitalism was free to revert to lines of technological development more in accord with its normal, decentralized, free-market imperatives—such as privately funded research into marketable products like personal computers. This is the line that men like Toffler and Gilder took in the late seventies and early eighties.

In fact, the United States never did abandon gigantic, government-controlled schemes of technological development. Mainly, they just shifted to military research—and not just to Soviet-scale schemes like Star Wars, but to weapons projects, research in communications and surveillance technologies, and similar security-related concerns. To some degree this had always been true: the billions poured into missile research had always dwarfed the sums allocated to the space program. Yet by the seventies, even basic research came to be conducted following military priorities. One reason we don't have robot factories is because roughly 95 percent of robotics research funding has been channeled through the Pentagon, which is more interested in developing unmanned drones than in automating paper mills.

A case could be made that even the shift to research and development on information technologies and medicine was not so much a reorientation toward market-driven consumer imperatives, but part of an all-out effort to follow the technological humbling of the Soviet Union with total victory in the global class war—seen simultaneously as the imposition of absolute U.S. military dominance overseas, and, at home, the utter rout of social movements.

For the technologies that did emerge proved most conducive to surveillance, work discipline, and social control. Computers have opened up certain spaces of freedom, as

we're constantly reminded, but instead of leading to the workless utopia Abbie Hoffman imagined, they have been employed in such a way as to produce the opposite effect. They have enabled a financialization of capital that has driven workers desperately into debt, and, at the same time, provided the means by which employers have created "flexible" work regimes that have both destroyed traditional job security and increased working hours for almost everyone. Along with the export of factory jobs, the new work regime has routed the union movement and destroyed any possibility of effective working-class politics.

Meanwhile, despite unprecedented investment in research on medicine and life sciences, we await cures for cancer and the common cold, and the most dramatic medical breakthroughs we have seen have taken the form of drugs such as Prozac, Zoloft, or Ritalin—tailor-made to ensure that the new work demands don't drive us completely, dysfunctionally crazy.

With results like these, what will the epitaph for neoliberalism look like? I think historians will conclude it was a form of capitalism that systematically prioritized political imperatives over economic ones. Given a choice between a course of action that would make capitalism seem the only possible economic system, and one that would transform capitalism into a viable, long-term economic system, neoliberalism chooses the former every time. There is every reason to believe that destroying job security while increasing working hours does not create a more productive (let alone more innovative or loyal) workforce. Probably, in economic terms, the result is negative—an impression confirmed by lower growth rates in just about all parts of the world in the eighties and nineties.

But the neoliberal choice has been effective in depoliticizing labor and overdetermining the future. Economically, the growth of armies, police, and private security services amounts to dead weight. It's possible, in fact, that the very dead weight of the apparatus created to ensure the ideological victory of capitalism will sink it. But it's also easy to see how choking off any sense of an inevitable, redemptive future that could be different from our world is a crucial part of the neoliberal project.

At this point all the pieces would seem to be falling neatly into place. By the sixties, conservative political forces were growing skittish about the socially disruptive effects of technological progress, and employers were beginning to worry about the economic impact of mechanization. The fading Soviet threat allowed for a reallocation of resources in directions seen as less challenging to social and economic arrangements, or indeed directions that could support a campaign of reversing the gains of progressive social movements and achieving a decisive victory in what U.S. elites saw as a global class war. The change of priorities was introduced as a withdrawal of big-government projects and a return to the market, but in fact the change shifted government-directed research away from programs like NASA or alternative energy sources and toward military, information, and medical technologies.

Of course this doesn't explain everything. Above all, it does not explain why, even in those areas that have become the focus of well-funded research projects, we have not seen anything like the kind of advances anticipated fifty years ago. If 95 percent of robotics research has been funded by the military, then where are the Klaatu-style killer robots shooting death rays from their eyes?

Obviously, there have been advances in military technology in recent decades. One of the reasons we all survived the Cold War is that while nuclear bombs might have worked as advertised, their delivery systems did not; intercontinental ballistic missiles weren't capable of striking cities, let alone specific targets inside cities, and this fact meant there was little point in launching a nuclear first strike unless you intended to destroy the world.

Contemporary cruise missiles are accurate by comparison. Still, precision weapons never do seem capable of assassinating specific individuals (Saddam, Osama, Qaddafi), even when hundreds are dropped. And ray guns have not materialized—surely not for lack of trying. We can assume the Pentagon has spent billions on death ray research, but the closest they've come so far are lasers that might, if aimed correctly, blind an enemy gunner looking directly at the beam. Aside from being unsporting, this is pathetic: lasers are a fifties technology. Phasers that can be set to stun do not appear to be on the drawing boards; and when it comes to infantry combat, the preferred weapon almost everywhere remains the AK-47, a Soviet design named for the year it was introduced: 1947.

THE END OF ~~THE WORLD~~ MATTER IS NEAR

BILL LEWIS

The Internet is a remarkable innovation, but all we are talking about is a super-fast and globally accessible combination of library, post office, and mail-order catalogue. Had the Internet been described to a science fiction aficionado in the fifties and sixties and touted as the most dramatic technological achievement since his time, his reaction would have been disappointment. Fifty years and this is the best our scientists managed to come up with? We expected computers that would think!

Overall, levels of research funding have increased dramatically since the seventies. Admittedly, the proportion of that funding that comes from the corporate sector has increased most dramatically, to the point that private enterprise is now funding twice as much research as the government, but the increase is so large that the total amount of government research funding, in real-dollar terms, is much higher than it was in the sixties. "Basic," "curiosity-driven," or "blue skies" research—the kind that is not driven by the prospect of any immediate practical application, and that is most likely to lead to unexpected breakthroughs—occupies an ever smaller proportion of the total, though so much money is being thrown around nowadays that overall levels of basic research funding have increased.

Yet most observers agree that the results have been paltry. Certainly we no longer see anything like the continual stream of conceptual revolutions—genetic inheritance, relativity, psychoanalysis, quantum mechanics—that people had grown used to, and even expected, a hundred years before. Why?

Part of the answer has to do with the concentration of resources on a handful of gigantic projects: "big science," as it has come to be called. The Human Genome Project is often held out as an example. After spending almost three billion dollars and employing thousands of scientists and staff in five different countries, it has mainly served to establish that there isn't very much to be learned from sequencing genes that's of much use to anyone else. Even more, the hype and political investment surrounding such projects demonstrate the degree to which even basic research now seems to be driven by political, administrative, and marketing imperatives that make it unlikely anything revolutionary will happen.

Here, our fascination with the mythic origins of Silicon Valley and the Internet has blinded us to what's really going on. It has allowed us to imagine that research and development is now driven, primarily, by small teams of plucky entrepreneurs, or the sort of decentralized cooperation that creates open-source software. This is not so, even though such research teams are most likely to produce results. Research and development is still driven by giant bureaucratic projects.

What has changed is the bureaucratic culture. The increasing interpenetration of government, university, and private firms has led everyone to adopt the language, sensibilities, and organizational forms that originated in the corporate world. Although this might have helped in creating marketable products, since that is what corporate bureaucracies are designed to do, in terms of fostering original research, the results have been catastrophic.

My own knowledge comes from universities, both in the United States and Britain. In both countries, the last thirty years have seen a veritable explosion of the proportion of working

hours spent on administrative tasks at the expense of pretty much everything else. In my own university, for instance, we have more administrators than faculty members, and the faculty members, too, are expected to spend at least as much time on administration as on teaching and research combined. The same is true, more or less, at universities worldwide.

The growth of administrative work has directly resulted from introducing corporate management techniques. Invariably, these are justified as ways of increasing efficiency and introducing competition at every level. What they end up meaning in practice is that everyone winds up spending most of their time trying to sell things: grant proposals; book proposals; assessments of students' jobs and grant applications; assessments of our colleagues; prospectuses for new interdisciplinary majors; institutes; conference workshops; universities themselves (which have now become brands to be marketed to prospective students or contributors); and so on.

As marketing overwhelms university life, it generates documents about fostering imagination and creativity that might just as well have been designed to strangle imagination and creativity in the cradle. No major new works of social theory have emerged in the United States in the last thirty years. We have been reduced to the equivalent of medieval scholastics, writing endless annotations of French theory from the seventies, despite the guilty awareness that if new incarnations of Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, or Pierre Bourdieu were to appear in the academy today, we would deny them tenure.

There was a time when academia was society's refuge for the eccentric, brilliant, and impractical. No longer. It is now the domain of professional self-marketers. As a result, in one of the most bizarre fits of social self-destructiveness in history, we seem to have decided we have no place for our eccentric, brilliant, and impractical citizens. Most languish in their mothers' basements, at best making the occasional, acute intervention on the Internet.

BILL LEWIS

If all this is true in the social sciences, where research is still carried out with minimal

overhead largely by individuals, one can imagine how much worse it is for astrophysicists. And, indeed, one astrophysicist, Jonathan Katz, has recently warned students pondering a career in the sciences. Even if you do emerge from the usual decade-long period languishing as someone else's flunky, he says, you can expect your best ideas to be stymied at every point:

You will spend your time writing proposals rather than doing research. Worse, because your proposals are judged by your competitors, you cannot follow your curiosity, but must spend your effort and talents on anticipating and deflecting criticism rather than on solving the important scientific problems. . . . It is proverbial that original ideas are the kiss of death for a proposal, because they have not yet been proved to work.

That pretty much answers the question of why we don't have teleportation devices or antigravity shoes. Common sense suggests that if you want to maximize scientific creativity, you find some bright people, give them the resources they need to pursue whatever idea comes into their heads, and then leave them alone. Most will turn up nothing, but one or two may well discover something. But if you want to minimize the possibility of unexpected breakthroughs, tell those same people they will receive no resources at all unless they spend the bulk of their time competing against each other to convince you they know in advance what they are going to discover.

In the natural sciences, to the tyranny of managerialism we can add the privatization of research results. As the British economist David Harvie has reminded us, "open source" research is not new. Scholarly research has always been open source, in the sense that scholars share materials and results. There is competition, certainly, but it is "convivial." This is no longer true of scientists working in the corporate sector, where findings are jealously guarded, but the spread of the corporate ethos within the academy and research institutes themselves has caused even publicly funded scholars to treat their findings as personal property. Academic publishers ensure that findings that are published are increasingly difficult to access, further enclosing the intellectual commons. As a result, convivial, open-source competition turns into something much more like classic market competition.

There are many forms of privatization, up to and including the simple buying up and suppression of inconvenient discoveries by large corporations fearful of their economic effects. (We cannot know how many synthetic fuel formulae have been bought up and placed in the vaults of oil companies, but it's hard to imagine nothing like this happens.) More subtle is the way the managerial ethos discourages everything adventurous or quirky, especially if there is no prospect of immediate results. Oddly, the Internet can be part of the problem here. As Neal Stephenson put it:

Most people who work in corporations or academia have witnessed something like the following: A number of engineers are sitting together in a room, bouncing ideas off each other. Out of the discussion emerges a new concept that seems promising. Then some laptop-wielding person in the corner, having performed a quick Google search, announces that this "new" idea is, in fact, an old one; it—or at least something vaguely similar—has already been tried. Either it failed, or it succeeded. If it failed, then no manager who wants to keep his or her job will approve spending money trying to revive it. If it succeeded, then it's patented and entry to the market is presumed to be unattainable, since the first people who thought of it will have "first-mover advantage" and will have created "barriers to entry." The number of seemingly promising ideas that have been crushed in this way must number in the millions.

And so a timid, bureaucratic spirit suffuses every aspect of cultural life. It comes festooned in a language of creativity, initiative, and entrepreneurialism. But the language is meaningless. Those thinkers most likely to make a conceptual breakthrough are the least likely to receive funding, and, if breakthroughs occur, they are not likely to find anyone willing to follow up on their most daring implications.

Giovanni Arrighi has noted that after the South Sea Bubble, British capitalism largely abandoned the corporate form. By the time of the Industrial Revolution, Britain had instead come to rely on a combination of high finance and small family firms—a pattern that held throughout the next century, the period of maximum scientific and technological innovation. (Britain at that time was also notorious for being just as generous to its oddballs and eccentrics as contemporary America is intolerant. A common expedient was to allow them to become rural vicars, who, predictably, became one of the main sources for amateur scientific discoveries.)

Contemporary, bureaucratic corporate capitalism was a creation not of Britain, but of the United States and Germany, the two rival powers that spent the first half of the twentieth century fighting two bloody wars over who would replace Britain as a dominant world power—wars that culminated, appropriately enough, in government-sponsored scientific programs to see who would be the first to discover the atom bomb. It is significant, then, that our current technological stagnation seems to have begun after 1945, when the United States replaced Britain as organizer of the world economy.

Americans do not like to think of themselves as a nation of bureaucrats—quite the opposite—but the moment we stop imagining bureaucracy as a phenomenon limited to government offices, it becomes obvious that this is precisely what we have become. The final victory over the Soviet Union did not lead to the domination of the market, but, in fact, cemented the dominance of conservative managerial elites, corporate bureaucrats who use the pretext of short-term, competitive, bottom-line thinking to squelch anything likely to

have revolutionary implications of any kind.

BILL LEWIS

If we do not notice that we live in a bureaucratic society, that is because bureaucratic norms and practices have become so all-pervasive that we cannot see them, or, worse, cannot imagine doing things any other way.

Computers have played a crucial role in this narrowing of our social imaginations. Just as the invention of new forms of industrial automation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had the paradoxical effect of turning more and more of the world's population into full-time industrial workers, so has all the software designed to save us from administrative responsibilities turned us into part- or full-time administrators. In the same way that university professors seem to feel it is inevitable they will spend more of their time managing grants, so affluent housewives simply accept that they will spend weeks every year filling out forty-page online forms to get their children into grade schools. We all spend increasing amounts of time punching passwords into our phones to manage bank and credit accounts and learning how to perform jobs once performed by travel agents, brokers, and accountants.

Someone once figured out that the average American will spend a cumulative six months of life waiting for traffic lights to change. I don't know if similar figures are available for how long it takes to fill out forms, but it must be at least as long. No population in the history of the world has spent nearly so much time engaged in paperwork.

In this final, stultifying stage of capitalism, we are moving from poetic technologies to bureaucratic technologies. By poetic technologies I refer to the use of rational and technical means to bring wild fantasies to reality. Poetic technologies, so understood, are as old as civilization. Lewis Mumford noted that the first complex machines were made of people. Egyptian pharaohs were able to build the pyramids only because of their mastery of administrative procedures, which allowed them to develop production-line techniques, dividing up complex tasks into dozens of simple operations and assigning each to one team

of workmen—even though they lacked mechanical technology more complex than the inclined plane and lever. Administrative oversight turned armies of peasant farmers into the cogs of a vast machine. Much later, after cogs had been invented, the design of complex machinery elaborated principles originally developed to organize people.

Yet we have seen those machines—whether their moving parts are arms and torsos or pistons, wheels, and springs—being put to work to realize impossible fantasies: cathedrals, moon shots, transcontinental railways. Certainly, poetic technologies had something terrible about them; the poetry is likely to be as much of dark satanic mills as of grace or liberation. But the rational, administrative techniques were always in service to some fantastic end.

From this perspective, all those mad Soviet plans—even if never realized—marked the climax of poetic technologies. What we have now is the reverse. It's not that vision, creativity, and mad fantasies are no longer encouraged, but that most remain free-floating; there's no longer even the pretense that they could ever take form or flesh. The greatest and most powerful nation that has ever existed has spent the last decades telling its citizens they can no longer contemplate fantastic collective enterprises, even if—as the environmental crisis demands— the fate of the earth depends on it.

What are the political implications of all this? First of all, we need to rethink some of our most basic assumptions about the nature of capitalism. One is that capitalism is identical with the market, and that both therefore are inimical to bureaucracy, which is supposed to be a creature of the state.

The second assumption is that capitalism is in its nature technologically progressive. It would seem that Marx and Engels, in their giddy enthusiasm for the industrial revolutions of their day, were wrong about this. Or, to be more precise: they were right to insist that the mechanization of industrial production would destroy capitalism; they were wrong to predict that market competition would compel factory owners to mechanize anyway. If it didn't happen, that is because market competition is not, in fact, as essential to the nature of capitalism as they had assumed. If nothing else, the current form of capitalism, where much of the competition seems to take the form of internal marketing within the bureaucratic structures of large semi-monopolistic enterprises, would come as a complete surprise to them.

Defenders of capitalism make three broad historical claims: first, that it has fostered rapid scientific and technological growth; second, that however much it may throw enormous wealth to a small minority, it does so in such a way as to increase overall prosperity; third, that in doing so, it creates a more secure and democratic world for everyone. It is clear that capitalism is not doing any of these things any longer. In fact, many of its defenders are retreating from claiming that it is a good system and instead falling back on the claim that it

is the only possible system—or, at least, the only possible system for a complex, technologically sophisticated society such as our own.

But how could anyone argue that current economic arrangements are also the only ones that will ever be viable under any possible future technological society? The argument is absurd. How could anyone know?

Granted, there are people who take that position—on both ends of the political spectrum. As an anthropologist and anarchist, I encounter anticivilizational types who insist not only that current industrial technology leads only to capitalist-style oppression, but that this must necessarily be true of any future technology as well, and therefore that human liberation can be achieved only by returning to the Stone Age. Most of us are not technological determinists.

But claims for the inevitability of capitalism have to be based on a kind of technological determinism. And for that very reason, if the aim of neoliberal capitalism is to create a world in which no one believes any other economic system could work, then it needs to suppress not just any idea of an inevitable redemptive future, but any radically different technological future. Yet there's a contradiction. Defenders of capitalism cannot mean to convince us that technological change has ended—since that would mean capitalism is not progressive. No, they mean to convince us that technological progress is indeed continuing, that we do live in a world of wonders, but that those wonders take the form of modest improvements (the latest iPhone!), rumors of inventions about to happen ("I hear they are going to have flying cars pretty soon"), complex ways of juggling information and imagery, and still more complex platforms for filling out of forms.

I do not mean to suggest that neoliberal capitalism—or any other system—can be successful in this regard. First, there's the problem of trying to convince the world you are leading the way in technological progress when you are holding it back. The United States, with its decaying infrastructure, paralysis in the face of global warming, and symbolically devastating abandonment of its manned space program just as China accelerates its own, is doing a particularly bad public relations job. Second, the pace of change can't be held back forever. Breakthroughs will happen; inconvenient discoveries cannot be permanently suppressed. Other, less bureaucratized parts of the world—or at least, parts of the world with bureaucracies that are not so hostile to creative thinking—will slowly but inevitably attain the resources required to pick up where the United States and its allies have left off. The Internet does provide opportunities for collaboration and dissemination that may help break us through the wall as well. Where will the breakthrough come? We can't know. Maybe 3D printing will do what the robot factories were supposed to. Or maybe it will be something else. But it will happen.

About one conclusion we can feel especially confident: it will not happen within the framework of contemporary corporate capitalism—or any form of capitalism. To begin setting up domes on Mars, let alone to develop the means to figure out if there are alien civilizations to contact, we're going to have to figure out a different economic system. Must the new system take the form of some massive new bureaucracy? Why do we assume it must? Only by breaking up existing bureaucratic structures can we begin. And if we're going to invent robots that will do our laundry and tidy up the kitchen, then we're going to have to make sure that whatever replaces capitalism is based on a far more egalitarian distribution of wealth and power—one that no longer contains either the super-rich or the desperately poor willing to do their housework. Only then will technology begin to be marshaled toward human needs. And this is the best reason to break free of the dead hand of the hedge fund managers and the CEOs—to free our fantasies from the screens in which such men have imprisoned them, to let our imaginations once again become a material force in human history.

Samantha Grossman: 1 in 4 Americans Apparently Unaware the Earth Orbits the Sun

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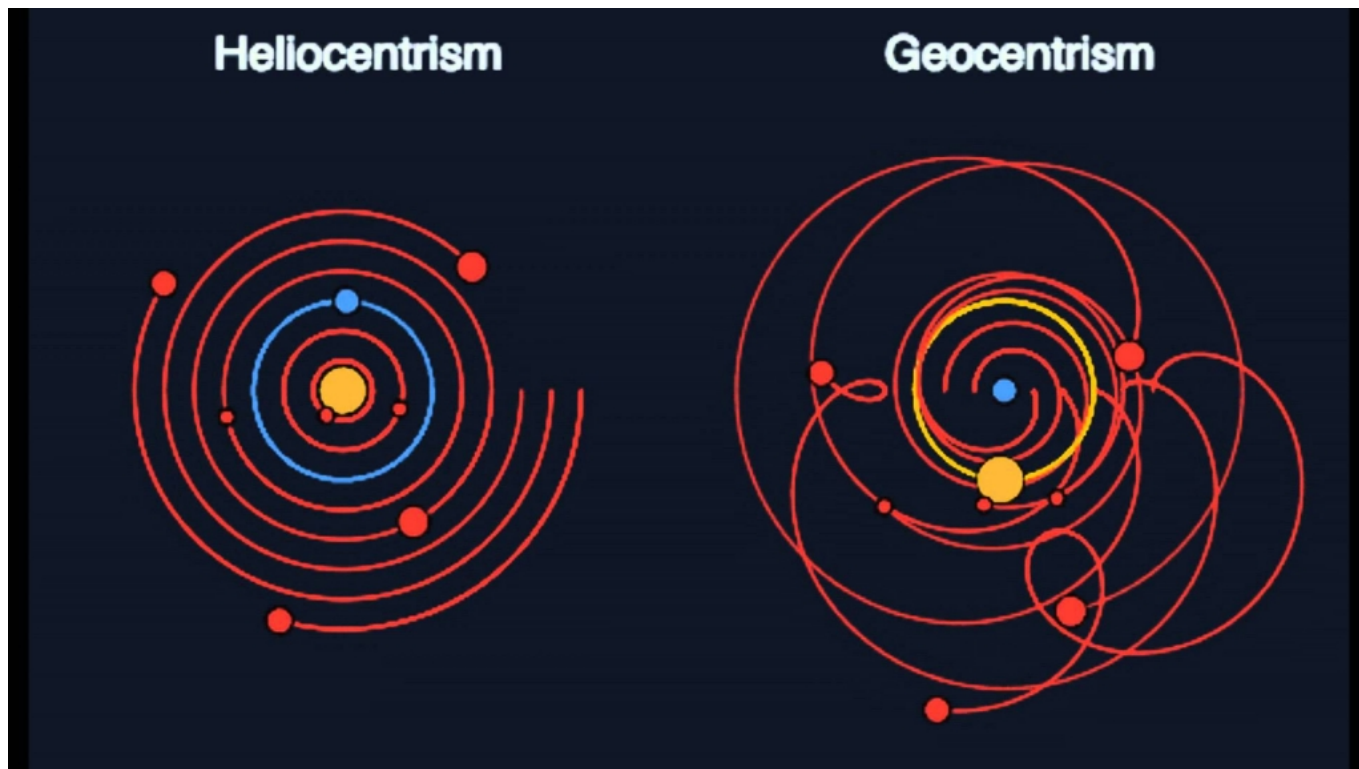
A National Science Foundation study involving 2,200 participants find that about 25 percent of Americans got this question wrong: 'Does the Earth go around the sun, or does the sun go around the Earth?'

Does the Earth go around the sun, or does the sun go around the Earth?

When asked that question, 1 in 4 Americans surveyed answered incorrectly. Yes, 1 in 4. In other words, a quarter of Americans do not understand one of the most fundamental principles of basic science. So that's where we are as a society right now.

The survey, conducted by the National Science Foundation, included more than 2,200 participants in the U.S., AFP reports. It featured a nine-question quiz about physical and biological science and the average score was a 6.5.

And the fact that only 74 percent of participants knew that the Earth revolved around the sun is perhaps less alarming than the fact that only 48 percent knew that humans evolved from earlier species of animals.

Here's the thing, though: Americans actually fared better than Europeans who took similar quizzes — at least when it came to the sun and Earth question. Only 66 percent of European Union residents answered that one correctly.

We won't know the full results of the survey—or its methodology—until the National Science

Foundation delivers its report to President Obama and U.S. lawmakers. But on this evidence we may end up getting a new national holiday out of this: Spread the Word That the Earth Revolves Around the Sun Day.

Anselm Jappe: Politics Without Politics

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STUDENTS, USING TRASH CAN LIDS AS SHIELDS, MARCHING IN PARIS, FRANCE IN MAY 1968. MARC RIBOUD.

At first, the "primacy of politics" was a pet notion of Hitler's jurist, Carl Schmitt. But for some time now the "radical" left has hitched its wagon to a "return of the political" in which "politics" *per se* is looked on as the polar opposite of the "market." Must it be taken then as an article of faith that opposition to capitalism, or to its contemporary excesses, goes via what is commonly called politics? It is clear that nothing would have changed if Ségolène

Royal, the 2007 French Socialist Party candidate for president, had been elected instead of rightist Nicolas Sarkozy. But even if the Trotskyists, who have taken over from the social democrats turned liberals, were to share power in France, they would not exactly rock the world to its foundations. In Germany, the "Party of Democratic Socialism" takes part in regional government; in Italy, *Rifondazione Comunista* had cabinet posts; even the Italian *Centri sociali*, often considered the cutting edge of dissent, send a few deputy mayors to city hall. Everywhere, these representatives of the "radical" left end up supporting neoliberal policies. Therefore, should "truly" radical parties be formed that would never sink into the same quagmire? Or are the reasons for these "betrayals" structural? Does every involvement in politics inevitably lead to surrender to the market and its laws, regardless of any subjective intentions to the contrary?

It would therefore make sense to ask a basic question: what is meant by the term "politics"? The whole topic is home to a confusion similar to the one that bedevils "labor" and its critique. Criticising labor makes no sense at all if it is identified with productive activity as such, which is undoubtedly a fact of life present in every human society. But everything changes if by labor we understand what this word actually denotes in capitalist society: the self-referential expenditure of mere labor power regardless of its content. Thought of in this way, labor is an historical phenomenon that exists only in capitalist society and that can be criticized and eventually abolished. Indeed, the "labor" that all the actors on the political stage, left, right, and center, want to save is labor as understood in this narrow sense. Likewise, the concept of "politics" must be clearly defined. If it is identified with collective action, with the conscious intervention of men in society, with "love of the world" (Arendt), it is obvious that it enjoys unanimous support and that a "critique of politics" could only be understood as mere indifference to the world. But those who regularly advocate a "return to politics" have a much more specific idea of what "politics" is: the politics whose alleged disappearance causes them such serious withdrawal symptoms. The ritual evocation of "politics" as the only possible way to change the world is the core concept of today's "left," from the Bourdieusian sociologists to *Multitude*, from ATTAC to the "radical" electoral left. Despite their explicit intention to create a "completely different" politics, they still lapse into "realism" and the "lesser evil," take part in elections, comment on referendums, discuss the possible evolution of the Socialist Party, seek to make alliances and seal some "historic compromise" or other. Faced with this desire to "play the game"—and almost always as a "representative" of some "interest"—movements and moments of radical opposition that embraced "anti-politics" should be recalled: from the historical anarchists to the artistic avant-gardes, from certain movements in the global South, such as *Critica Radical* in Fortaleza, Brazil, to the wildcat strike of May '68 in France and the continuous state of insubordination in Italian factories during the 1970s. This "anti-politics" is just as far removed from the refusal of conscious intervention as "anti-art," the rejection of art by Dadaists, Surrealists, or Situationists which was not a rejection of artistic means but, on the contrary, was conceived as the only way to remain faithful to the original intentions of art.

But can anyone seriously believe that politics is the social sphere that might allow limits to be placed on the market? Or that politics is "democratic" by nature and opposed to the capitalist economic world, where the survival of the fittest is the rule?

Modern capitalist society, based on the commodity and universal competition, requires a body that takes care of those public structures without which it could not exist. This body is the state, and politics, in the modern (and narrow) sense of the term, is the struggle to assume control over the state. But this sphere of politics is not external or an alternative to the sphere of the commodity economy. On the contrary, it is structurally dependent on it. In the political arena, the object of contention is the distribution of the fruits of the commodity system—the workers' movement has essentially played this role—but not its actual existence. The visible proof: nothing is possible in politics that has not been previously "funded" by commodity production, and whenever the latter goes off the rails, politics becomes a clash between armed gangs. This kind of "politics" is a secondary regulatory mechanism within the fetishistic and unconscious commodity system. It is not a "neutral" body or a victory that opposition movements snatched from the capitalist bourgeoisie. Indeed, the bourgeoisie is not necessarily hostile to the state or the public sphere; that all depends on the historical moment.

Contemporary advocates of "politics" distort the original goal of "action" because they reduce it to mere tinkering with a machine which has come to be accepted as such. Today, "action" must face situations that are far too serious to be confronted with the out-dated means of politics. The new arena is that of a real anthropological transformation, which is both the result of over two centuries of capitalism and, in the course of the last few decades, of its increasingly visible programmed self-destruction. This regression is leading to *barbarisation*. Given the increasing frequency of incidents—such as the one involving teenagers who laughed as they used a camera phone to film a dead female classmate of theirs who had just been run over by a bus so that they could later upload the video to YouTube—it is somewhat inadequate to resort to unemployment, the casualization of labor, or the shortcomings of our schools as an explanation. Rather, we are witnessing a generalized, albeit inconsistent, "anthropological regression" which appears to be the product of a deep-seated collective mental disorder, of a narcissistic psychosis bequeathed by commodity fetishism and the relation it imposes on the way individuals interact with the world. No one can honestly offer any effective short-term remedies in the face of this crisis of civilization. Indeed, precisely because the situation is so serious, the circumstances call on us to do something, anything, right now, on the grounds that there is zero time for discussion and that *praxis* is better than theory. In this age of financial and molecular capitalism, Fordist-era forms of opposition will simply not do.

A precondition for reviving the prospect for action is to break clearly and definitively away from all "politics" in the institutional sense. Today, the only possible form of "politics" is

radical separation from the world of politics and its institutions of representation and delegation, in order to invent and replace it with new forms of direct intervention. In this context, it seems pointless to confer with anyone who still wishes to cast their *vote*. Those who, almost 140 years after the introduction of universal suffrage, still flock to the ballot box, only deserve the words proclaimed by Octave Mirbeau in 1888,[1] or Albert Libertad in 1906.[2] The conquest of the universal franchise was one of the great battles of the historic left. The right-wing voter, however, is not such a fool: sometimes he gets the little he expects from his candidates, even when it is not in the official platform of his party (for example, toleration of tax evasion and violations of labor laws). His representatives do not betray him too much; and the voter who only votes for the candidate who is going to hire their relative or obtain vast subsidies for the farmers in his district is, after all, the most rational voter. The left-wing voter is much more stupid: although he has never obtained what he has voted for, he persists. He has obtained neither great change nor scraps. He lets himself be lulled by mere promises. That is why those who voted for Berlusconi in Italy were by no means fools: they were not just seduced by television networks, as his opponents would have everyone believe. They obtained limited, but very real, benefits from their government (and above all from its *laissez-faire* policies). But to vote again for the left after their time in government—and on this score one can only side with Mirbeau—smacks of the pathological.

The rejection of "politics" thus conceived is not the product of a mannered taste for extremism. Faced with a threatening anthropological regression, to appeal to parliament is like trying to quell a hurricane with a religious procession. The only "realistic" proposals—in the sense that they could effectively change the course of events—are of the following kind: the immediate abolition, starting tomorrow, of all television. Is there a party in the world, however, that would dare to embrace such a proposal? What measures have been adopted during the last few decades that could really slow down the advance of barbarism? It will be said that a few small steps are better than nothing. But where have such steps actually been taken? Thirty years ago, those most undaunted laid down proposals for one television-free day a week. Today, there are hundreds of television channels for the asking. If nothing has managed to stop this continuous degeneration, it means that the goals and methods were wrong and that a complete rethink is required. And it is self-evident that this cannot be done by keeping the public sweet or by appearing on television.

There are some examples of anti-political action: the "volunteer wreckers of genetically modified crops," especially those who operate at night, thus reviving the tradition of sabotage rather than resorting to media stunts, or actions seeking to put surveillance and biometric recognition equipment out of action. The residents of Val di Susa in the Italian Alps could be cited in this respect. On various occasions they have blocked the construction of a high-speed train line in their mountains. This prevalence of "defensive" struggles does not necessarily imply the absence of a broader perspective. On the contrary, these struggles

against the worst "nuisances" help to keep such a perspective open. Against the dehumanization engineered by the commodity, which threatens to put a stop once and for all to any alternative, at the very least the *possibility* of future emancipation needs to be safeguarded. This may allow for new fronts and new alliances to be created. There are issues, such as the expropriation of individuals from their own biological reproduction, publicized under the rubric of "artificial fertilization techniques," where the positions of the modernist left are so fully consonant with the delusions of technological omnipotence entertained by contemporary capitalism that even the Pope's stance seems to acquire an air of rationality. The opposite of barbarism is humanization. This concept is real enough, but hard to define. A feasible "policy" nowadays would be defense of the minor victories that have been historically achieved on the road to humanization, and opposition to their abolition. Contemporary capitalism is not just the economic injustice that still lies at the heart of debate, and its list of misdeeds is not even complete with the environmental disasters it causes. It is also a dismantling—a "deconstruction"—of the symbolic and psychological foundations of human culture, which is especially evident in the process of dematerialization that electronic media have brought about. With regard to this aspect of the problem, it is of no importance whether it is Sarkozy or Royal, Besancenot or Le Pen whose face appears on the small screen.

Practice still needs to be reinvented without surrendering to the demand to "do something and do it quick," which always leads to a rerun of things that were already tried and found wanting. The real problem is general isolation—one that is above all mental—within the fetishistic forms of existence affecting the alleged adversaries as well as the supporters of the commodity system.[3] The struggle to break with these forms that are anchored in everyone's minds, to strip money and the commodity, competition and labor, the state and "development," progress and growth of their innocent air, relies on those "theoretical struggles" situated beyond the fixed opposition between "theory" and "*praxis*." Why should the analysis of the logic of the commodity or patriarchy be dubbed "merely" theory, whereas any strike for higher pay or any demonstration by students protesting because the university is not doing enough to prepare them for the world of work is labelled "*praxis*" or "politics"?

Thought and feeling precede men's action, and the way they act derives from what they think and feel. Changing the way men think and feel is already a form of action, of *praxis*. Once there is a clear idea, at least among a minority, of what the goals of an action are, things can rapidly unfold. May 1968 comes readily to mind in this regard, seemingly appearing out of the blue but in fact silently prepared by lucid minorities. On the other hand, we have often seen—and never more so than in the Russian Revolution—even the best opportunities for action lead in the absence of a clear theoretical grounding. Such clarification does not necessarily take place in books and conferences but must be present in people's minds. Rather than identify politics with the public institutions of commodity

society, it could be identified with *praxis* in general. But this *praxis* must not be opposed to theory in some abstract way. The theory under discussion here is not the servant of *praxis*, nor its preparation, but an integral part of it. Fetishism is not a set of false representations; it is the entirety of forms—such as money—in which life *really* unfolds within a capitalist society. Every step forward in theoretical understanding, as well as its spread, is therefore in itself a practical act.

Naturally, the story does not end there. Future forms of *praxis* will no doubt be somewhat diverse and will also involve defensive struggles at the level of material reproduction (such as struggles against the casualization of labor and against the destruction of the Welfare State). While there is a need to break with "policies" that only offer to defend the commodification of the social categories constituted by fetishistic logic itself along the lines of say, "purchasing power," it is nonetheless necessary to prevent capitalist development from destroying the basis of survival for large sectors of the population and generating new forms of poverty, which are often due more to exclusion than exploitation. Indeed, to be exploited these days has become almost a privilege compared to the fate of the masses of those who have been declared "superfluous to requirements" because they "are unprofitable" (i.e. they cannot be used profitably in commodity production). The reactions of the "superfluous," however, take many different forms and may themselves tend towards barbarism. Victimhood is no guarantee of moral integrity. One fact is thus overriding all the others: the behavior of individuals in response to the vicissitudes of life within capitalism is not the mechanical result of their "social situation," their "interests," or their geographical, ethnic, or religious background, nor of their gender or sexual orientation. Nobody's response to the collapse of capitalism into barbarism can be predicted. This is not because of the supposedly generalized "individualization" that sociologists are crowing over non-stop so as to sidestep all mention of the increasing standardization that it conceals. But the dividing lines are no longer created by capitalist development. Just as barbarism can arise anywhere, in Finnish high schools and African shantytowns, among yuppies and ghetto kids, among high-tech soldiers and unarmed rebels, so too can resistance to barbarism and the impulse for social emancipation arise anywhere (although with infinitely greater difficulty!), even where one would least expect it. While no single social *category* has squared with the forecasts of those who sought an agent of social emancipation, opposition to the inhuman conditions of life under capitalism is nevertheless always re-emerging. This landscape teeming with false friends and unexpected aid constitutes the present necessarily ill-defined terrain on which all "political recomposition" must now take place.

NOTES

1. "One thing fairly fills me with surprise. In fact, I'd even say that it leaves me dumbfounded, and that's at the scientific moment in which I write, after countless experiences and daily scandals, there can still exist in our dear France […] one voter, one single voter—that irrational, inorganic, hallucinatory animal—who agrees to take time out from his affairs, his dreams, and his pleasures in order to vote in favor of someone or something. If we think about it for just one instant, is this surprising phenomenon not one fit to upset the subtlest philosophies and confound reason? Where is the Balzac who can give us the physiology of the modern elector, or the Charcot who will explain the anatomy and mentality of this incurable lunatic? … He voted yesterday, he'll vote tomorrow, and he will always vote. Sheep go to the slaughter; they say nothing and expect nothing. But at least they don't vote for the butcher who will kill them and the bourgeois who will eat them. More bovine than cattle, more sheep-like than sheep, the elector names his butcher and chooses his bourgeois. He has fought revolutions in order to enjoy this right. … So, my good man, go home and strike against universal suffrage" (Originally published in *Le Figaro*, November 28, 1888, and republished in Octave Mirbeau, *La Grève des électeurs*[The Electors' Strike] (Montreuil-sous-Bois: L'Insomniaque, 2007). This English translation available online at: www.marxists.org/subject/anarchism/mirbeau/voters-strike. One hundred years after this call for a "voters strike," it is still possible, and necessary, to repeat the same arguments. Were it to be published now with a few name changes, anyone would think the text from which these lines are excerpted had been written today and not in the early days of the Third Republic. After more than a century, electors are clearly none the wiser, which, admittedly, does not amount to a very heartening state of affairs.

2. "The elector is the criminal … The elector, the voter is you, the one accepting the status quo, the one whose support for the ballot-box sanctions all its misery, whose activity underwrites the enslavement it perpetrates … You are a danger to we free men, we anarchists. In the danger you pose you are no different from tyrants, from the masters you choose, name, support, feed, protect with your bayonets, defend with your brute force, extol with your ignorance, legalise with your ballot papers and foist upon us by your idiocy … If command-hungry and platitudinous candidates kowtow to your paper autocracy, if you get carried away by the incense and promises showered on you by those who have always betrayed, deceived and sold you off, it is because you are just like them … Go on, vote! Trust your representatives, believe in your deputies, but stop complaining. You yourself have donned the yokes you bear, just as you commit the crimes whose consequences you suffer. You are master and criminal and yet ironically slave and victim too." Albert Libertad, *Le Culte de la charogne: Anarchisme, un état de révolution permanente (1897-1908)* [The Carrion Cult: Anarchism, A State of Permanent Revolution (1897-1908)] (Marseilles: Agone, 2006).

3. On the other hand, one of the new realities that anti-capitalist *praxis* must confront today is the blurring of borders between supporters and enemies of the system and in the dissemination of fragments of critical thought among numerous individuals who

simultaneously participate fully in the ordinary business of this world: they read Marcuse and work in advertising, they manage businesses and donate money to the Zapatistas, they declare themselves anarchists and forge careers as administrators, etc. The need to live does not, however, imply a willingness to be played for a fool. A veritable "mithridatism" designed to arrest any awareness that might disrupt an individual life may be discerned here.

Anselm Jappe

Born in Germany in 1962, ANSELM JAPPE is one of the key proponents of "the critique of value" school in France today. He is the author of several major works of critical theory, including *Guy Debord* (University of California Press, 1999), *Les Aventures de la marchandise: pour une nouvelle critique de la valeur* (Denoël, 2003), *Crédit à mort* (2011) and, with Robert Kurz, *Les Habits neufs de l'empire* (Lignes, 2004). He currently lectures in both art history and sociology in universities across France and Italy. "Politics Without Politics" is an excerpt from a forthcoming translation of *Crédit à mort* by Alastair Hemmens, John McHale, and Mike DeSocio.