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## **Student as Value Based Product: Reconceptualizing the Subjective Nature of Education**

**Arturo Rodriguez, PhD**  
*Boise State University*

**Kevin Russel Magill, MPA MA**  
*The University of Texas at Austin*

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**Arturo Rodriguez, PhD**  
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**Abstract**

*In this paper we consider how students are positioned in school classrooms and the effect positioning has on their ontological and social development. The creation of a power-sanctioned objective reality, we argue, pervades student learning in contemporary U.S. classrooms, reducing knowledge students might otherwise acquire to socially acceptable conditions they assume in adulthood. Consequently, this creates a society in which anti-intellectualism is normalized as learned codes of behavior are lived. Homogenization then isolates and alienates students as they are produced to fill the ranks of a skills-based workforce. Several factors work in tandem to ingrain students with a perceived objective consciousness, they include: top down educational policy, commodification of difference, distraction and normalization of the above mentioned codes of conduct, a sense of morality tied to citizenship, and civilized absurdity: students become mere abstractions of living experience as they accept life as citizen worker.*

*Keywords:* critical theory, humanism, ideology, pedagogy, political economy, neoliberalism

Corporatization of the academy ensures all systems of education are affected. As grant dollars are funneled toward building projects, the improvement of athletic programs and engorging of the administrative body, the education of students as critical social agents is relegated to the margins of public life. Private industry, with its tentacled hold on education, ensures the divestiture of subjectivity as it propagates capitol 'T' truth, represented in the prescriptive means by which kindergarten through tertiary students are educated. Conceptual and ontological legitimization of social systems, as the mechanism of state enforcement also ensures maximum returns on investment in public schooling for private industry. Coercive power structures then, restricting access to everyday freedoms, continue to be woven into the liminal fabric of student consciousness.

This fragmentation of truth serves to systematically isolate and alienate, as students experience the appropriation of the means of production; knowledge is tied to the skill set students must acquire in school. Once removed from a latitudinarian, progressive or encouraging space, notions of the self, the ideas of student as critical social agent become mired in small-minded conceptions of reality. As anti-intellectual platitudes choke the lifeblood of creativity, the educational system, like the economic system, becomes representative of the perceived value the student has to society. This relationship is inversely proportional to the

interest the teacher has in her or him as a student and member of the community. The teacher's valuations of the student are also relative to ways students have come to be valued as particular groups (laborers, scientists, doctors, athletes) *qua* society that is units of measure, surplus value, existing on spreadsheets, the commodification of the human spirit.

As with all aspects of society, White, Anglo-Saxon, protestant, and heterosexual students are affirmed while all others are alienated as they are positioned. "Othered" students are offered access only as interests converge, supporting systematic obedience along propaganda lines in favor of economic interests. Personal subjectivity, a student's lived ontology runs counter to knowledge imposed via mainstream educational practices. The development of an outward critical eye is crucial. The student's *a posteriori* consciousness and education becomes merely their indoctrination into a homogenized student population, as authoritarian educational relationships require a perceived objective understanding of curricula. By situating relationships as such, value is placed on fetishized, westernized and obedient ways of knowing. Distracting campaigns that complicate and demoralize those attempting to understand and work within ambiguous practices reinforces rigged lines of morality; once isolated dis-information and ineffective teaching leads to mis-education of the American public. As citizens lose their autonomy they become discouraged and accept the political process as the purview of the wealthy.

Anti-intellectualism may best be illustrated in run-of-the-mill examples of American life, consider the following: on a recent episode of "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart", the host cites statistical data concerning the conflict with ISIS. In the episode he states that 91% of Americans felt ISIS was a threat to the United States, of those, 65% felt Americans should bomb ISIS in Syria. This might not be troubling, as there isn't an immediate threat to the United States. What is troubling, only 50% of those polled could identify Syria on a map (O'Neil, Stewart, & Bodow, 2014). How is it that Americans wish to bomb something they know little about? The crisis of education and the crisis of democracy then continue to herd citizens toward an objective truth in which sensationalism and emotion govern understanding and decision-making. Political economy becomes the justification for acting on education as truth, one is a college degree or other form of education; which grant us a license to live and articulate our consent on the world's stage.

On the other hand, critical consciousness, criticality or criticism imply students enjoy absolute freedom; the fulfillment of physical, spiritual and intellectual human need. Critical social agency originates with individual students, not from a universalized curriculum or re-creation of a particular teacher's knowledge. Creativity and art, as Maxine Greene (2001) would argue, are variations of idea and diversity meeting experiences allowing for nuanced and lively critical thinking in the purposefully narrowed academic experience. Knowledge then becomes de-stagnated via its fluidity, clarifying objective understandings as we, "find new visions, new ways of living in [our] fragile human world" (Greene, 2001, p. 207). In this critical essay we argue against an all-encompassing or unifying truth and submit critical humanism as an alternative narrative to the engagement of teaching and learning that occurs in schools. Our work is not bound by conformity within man's construction of the world, but rather to consider man's construction of the world and the ways human nature is expressed in personal understandings. That is, I am human as I think and act myself human and not simply as I identify myself as such. Singular realities do not exist; reality will always be a dialogue between the personal subjectivities of human beings engaged in the struggle for human freedom.

## Systems of Domination

That *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) (2001), *Race to the Top* (2009) or *Common Core* (2015) are educational policies meant to subvert a progressive agenda is a given among the left. Right wing pundits claim poor students fail due to their lack of cultural security. Poor students enter secondary or tertiary schools at a deficit, bringing with them their personal codes of conduct, social and cultural understandings and knowledge tied to their geographical origin. When schools fail to make academic progress, measured via state sanctioned standardized tests, the student's lack of success is tied to what is considered their non-academic education. These are peer and social group interactions, which form elements of their consciousness. They purportedly cannot understand such things as mainstream media since they lack markers attributable to the classes above necessary to relate to the information (art, travel, consumer based products) being reported. Furthermore they lack a background in the class culture accessible in the *very good* schools: the latest achievements in science, philosophy, and the literary canon of Shakespeare or Homer.

We are all at a deficit as we are socialized to understand a particular code of living. Power is not enforced using the police baton or incarceration, but by the ways we restrict ourselves in our everyday conduct. These are the social practices of control and supervision Foucault (1994) discusses in relating creativity and immanence. Subjects of history, that is human beings, are cast as objects by the stricture of society and replicate historically learned codes of behavior. We are the wind-up toy staring at the passersby in a toy-shop window. Our momentum is limited by our acquisition and access to the codes they prescribe, providentially articulated by systems of power [NCLB, Race to the Top, and Common Core]. Under NCLB, students were expected to acquire literacy and numeracy skills as defined by scientifically based programs, they were: calling out sight words and learning to phonicate and memorizing statically defined mathematical algorithms. Race to the Top further defined the NCLB agenda, creating competition among schools by punishing and dismantling those that could not make annual yearly progress on the gift of federally sanctioned and state mandated standardized tests.

Common Core entered the stage and was lauded by many as progressive and transformative. "They" claimed it would usher in a new era of creativity and imagination as students are taught to think critically, at least as defined by Common Core. Unlike NCLB or Race to the Top, Common Core's ethos is accessible. Standards for every grade level, P-12, can be found on their website; the site describes expected outcomes as students matriculate from one grade to the next. Although the rhetoric advertising their agenda claims transformative education, the reality is seen in the language lifted from NCLB and filtered through Race to the Top. It includes the successfully inept ideas and practices found to have little educational value, while addressing many of the louder concerns of teachers and parents assaulted by NCLB.

Common Core's focus on informational passages as literacy is a clear attempt to usher students toward a bureaucratic existence in the maintenance of the empire and its economic soul. The standards themselves suggest, "Most of the required reading in college and workforce training programs is informational in structure and challenging in content" (National Governors Association, 2010, p. 4). Where is the exploration of human persons, of experience, or of being? Its ideology is devoid of critical thinking. Prioritizing standards almost solely around informational texts teaches students to find key information and regurgitate, providing training only for passive knowledge intake. As much as 70% of readings in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) frameworks for grade 12 include this kind of text.

Higher education was established on the idea that an informed society could be cultivated for democratic and personal agency. The blatant disregard of these liberal principals is replaced with the value added, technical, and narrow-minded instruction based curriculum (the Academy is also tragically moving toward objective functionalism and away from subjectivity, criticality, or philosophy). One example, taken from the 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies Literacy standards, asks students to simply identify vocabulary: “Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text” (NGA, 2010, p. 61). In the preceding example, students are being asked to establish the prescribed knowledge from a text, a monotonous and largely uninspiring task. Many teachers do not see the curriculum as a means by which to consider ontology. Critical historians would argue that students must challenge the text culturally, socially, or philosophically, complexifying the narrative and historicizing the document are what might affect students ontologically.

The standards mentioned above claim to be clear and understandable. In comparing Common Core to previous examples of policy, Valerie Strauss (2014) points out:

Here is an example. This is a pre-Common Core Kindergarten standard from Massachusetts. “*Use objects and drawings to model and solve related addition and subtraction problems to ten.*” It is clean, clear and developmentally appropriate.

The equivalent Common Core standard:

“*Compose and decompose numbers from 11 to 19 into ten ones and some further ones, e.g., by using objects or drawings, and record each composition or decomposition by a drawing or equation (e.g.,  $18 = 10 + 8$ ); understand that these numbers are composed of ten ones and one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, or nine ones.*” (p. 1)

The preceding highlights the lack of clarity and the rigidity of instruction teachers must implement while teaching this math strategy. In the above we see a narrowing of instruction in two ways: students’ personal conceptions of math and the instructional limitations in the way it is taught. The standards in both cases decontextualize and effectively Tailorize the classroom.

Immanence is possibility as it meets creativity; the child able to imagine beyond codes of power. In the system of education currently in place, the product or outcome is students who graduate able to perform functions needed by society – a given amount of laborers who support the middle management and upper leisure classes. The iconic status, belonging to the world capitalist class, articulable via our spending power, defines the measure of our identity tied to the capitalist Truth. These are the things, or multiple forms and effects of power, rendering the boundaries of acceptable discourse by the very society in which it is created (Foucault, 1994). NCLB, Race to the Top, and Common Core become the moral belief of American education as they are sanctioned by pundits, teachers, politicians and professors. Why argue against the doctor prescribing the medicine you believe will cure your malady?

## **Revolution**

Resistance to the production of outcomes, then, becomes virtually impossible as a singular objective truth dominates the educational discourse. Creativity, and resultant freedom of the everyday student, becomes irrelevant to power in its limited economic utility (Freire, 2000; Greene, 1988; hooks, 1994). In turn, students become positioned as products that are exploitable, oppressed, and divided (Dunayevskaya, 1958 & 1981; Hudis, 2012; Magill & Rodriguez, 2014). Teacher’s valuation of a student’s humanity is proportional to ways a student

will theoretically become valued and alienated in education and the processes of capital (Marx, 2007). A fetishized educational expectation emerges from the utility a student brings to the culturally and globally homogenized culture that supports the “images”, not relationships that frame social life (Debord, 1994). Though educators attempt to work towards equality, the ethics of a narrowly conceived global “co-existence” have been established by Eurocentric and reactionary policy (Mignolo, 2006). Fusion between “differently positioned agents” (Brown & De Lissovoy, 2011) has resulted in superficial adjustments to education, like (so called) inclusive education, subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999), without solving the crisis of commodification of the human spirit as an economic consideration.

Critical Humanism, then, supports re-thinking limitations to the educational conditions that exploit, commodify and ingest all features of education while tying education to the economic food chain. We suggest a reconsideration of how man is understood, supporting the conditions that allow students to explore “the real” (Lacan, 1967/2004; Žižek, 1989 & 2002) in the humanity that is subjective existence.

The “tetrad” of commoditizing particular objective knowledge has made it the message (massage) (McLuhan & Fiore, 2001) to educational actors that we are not in a global village focusing on social responsibility, but rather within a value added power vacuum that is supported by the architects of that selfsame vacuum. It is for this existence teachers subconsciously realize students must be trained. Subsequent education reflects this need. Being has been historically reinforced through education, but also via historicity, stories, values, and other means of normalization and ostracization (Foucault, 1994; Hacking, 2002), allowing particular individuals to claim [divine] dominion over humanity and its social construction. This providence is aided by technologies and development in support of conceptions that appear to be aligned with what we consider a “modern” existence. So, “the proliferation of quasi-objects has exploded modern temporality along with its Constitution” (p. 73), so, “of course it (the student) is not a thing... (and) things (students) are not things (students) either” (Latour, 1993, p. 138).

Humans continue to exist in modes of consciousness and being within Martin Buber’s (2010) I-It (Ich-Du) relationship. He explains that we continue to live with barriers to our existence. Beings do not meet the objective reality described in the-it (in this case the student) as an experiential relationship to I (human being). Objectification, one objective reality, promotes an after schooling relationship of alienation (Marx, 2007), as we position students as theoretical beings, lacking in critical consciousness (Freire, 2000). Subsequent freedom and fulfillment of physical, spiritual, and intellectual human needs are conveyed as we consider new ways of being. That is, criticism (Rodriguez, 2008), familiarity (Greene, 1995), and social consideration must be the nucleus of consciousness; singular realities cannot conceptually exist if we hope to participate in a more meaningful and democratic educational experience.

### **Value Frame: Commodification of the Human Spirit**

Students, then, are positioned as value based products. They are exploitable in proportion to their material worth; if a college degree or high school diploma is a marker of success, the concomitant student loans and the limited career possibilities are also markers that relate their social position across the *Panopticon* that is the human experience. The college degree marks more than a position on the social ladder; an Ivy League outcome ensures, at least in part, membership in a network of forgiveness. This is the cultural information received as part of the community, career office, loan forgiveness, and other forms of noblesse oblige as graduates

continue to provide jobs for other graduates. Humans have become property of the state. The society treats them in accordance with measurable value: earning power, education, race, utility etc. as, “property has acquired an almost greater sacredness in our social conscience than religion: for offence against the latter there is lenience, for damage to the former no forgiveness” (Wagner, 1994, p. 267).

As the spirit becomes interchangeable with commodity, object is human and human is object. By legal definition, in the U.S., companies are also persons. The inescapable but overlooked nuances of social positioning reveal the double and now multiple consciousness described by Du Bois (1994). Du Bois’s (1994) critique can be extended to any person of even suggested deviance by those operating the consciousness of power. Teachers normalize the stratifying mechanisms; many realizing conditions are inequitable are ill equipped, ideologically, to aid students in improving their living conditions – as they are also commoditized agents of oppression. Consciousness compels the conditions of power, ensuring students are connected to assimilation/domination and disconnected to the language of cultural capital. The organization of lessons around rigid objective realities becomes the only way teachers understand schooling.

Yet, consider Greene (1973), how can there be a final or singular explanation of experience? It is this misunderstood notion that in part ensures the human spirit remains tethered to the culturally reproductive stories lauding capitalism’s top down authority. In considering the transmission of problematic instances/notions of capitalism, Dunayevskaya (1958) suggests in *Marxism and Freedom* that history itself is the struggle for freedom, as it describes simultaneously what needs to be done to throw off domination, and yet, is not recognized as a viable way of acting in the sub consciousness of the appropriately propagandized. Both Dunayevskaya (1982) and Marx’s (2007) call for ‘revolution in permanence’ as a critical re-conceptualization of what must occur at the dawn of revolution to thwart anti-oppressive micro-changes to the fabric of a system designed to enslave the spirit. This struggle is not only against the alienation of the social, but of the personal. Dunayevskaya (1982) further uses the myth of Adam and Eve to show the polarizing, positioning of gender as women are seen as angelic or devilish, a mythical thing rather than human beings. It is only the male European archetype that is accepted as complete. In this way, the commodification of the human spirit establishes a hierarchy of spirit. Those who are “us” remain unexposed to the “shadow side of American culture” (Greene, 1995, p. 67). Maxine Greene (1995) further suggests the conditions that separate and commodify extend even to those in the shadow, the coercive nature of American culture negates any notion we have freedom. The shadow must thus be considered in the language of reform. Greene (1995) posits that change is the quest for truth and liberation.

Rarely is the shadow seen, as the system quietly transforms the human advantage over animals to an “inorganic” existence, as “body, nature is then taken” (Marx, 2007, p.77). As humans become estranged from nature, the benefit of labor becomes service to the “gods” of men, which have replaced ancient deities in our consciousness. Once consciousness is removed, “sham oppositions” and socially constructed “self consciousness” (Marx, 2007, p. 17) further isolate, dehumanize, and relegate individuals to the smallest sphere of operation possible, until true nature has vanished. Citizenship conditions and frames, it allows individuals to wear its label, which symbolically (and sometimes literally) is understood as “humanity”. Humanity, in this case, is based on the “ethical, political, and epistemic dimensions” of European human dignity. Social justice; decisions of dignity, however, are “never at stake” for those making the decisions (Mignolo, 2006, p. 314).

The citizen as human is demonstrated in U.S. consciousness: a White student's death elicits outrage while the 11-year-old Guatemalan boy found in the south Texas desert becomes an afterthought. The former is unquestionably tragic, while the latter is an excuse for the expansion of border protection. Conversation quickly moves from the tragic loss of life to, "Keep immigrant drug dealers from spreading their tentacles" into Texas, a message from Governor Rick Perry to the National Guard he activated to secure the border (Chumley, 2014). Ironically, the land and the rest of the Southwest United States were forcefully taken from Mexico in the Mexican American War and the Texas Revolution respectively. Further, it was taken from people who, like the Guatemalan boy, were worth virtually nothing to the power structure of American historical consciousness.

Human capital then, serves as symbolic and universal "*means and power*", tools by which we are marginalized. "It" [human capital] wields utility as it transforms '*representation into reality and reality into mere representation*'" (Fromm & Bottomore, 2004, p. 131). In our acceptance of it and limited realization of it, "it transforms *real human and natural faculties* into mere abstract representations, i.e., *imperfections* and tormenting chimeras; and on the other hand, it transforms real *imperfections and fancies*, faculties which are impotent and which exist only in an individual's imagination" (Fromm & Bottomore, 2004, p. 131).

### **Personal Frame: The Individual, Society, and the Spectacle**

"Images", not relationships, that frame social life, result in the conditions by which we live. These are the pornification of American capitalist schooling, the means by which students are taught. We become members of the global elite as we buy our way through society. iPhones™, Hondas™ and Facebook™ liberate us from a banal existence. According to Guy Debord, "young people everywhere have been allowed to choose between love and a garbage disposal unit. Everywhere they have chosen the garbage disposal unit" (as cited in Chtcheglov, 1998, pg. 2). The missive to educational actors, we are the class struggle as we toil in support of the corporation: society will never communicate, a communal existence, as long as it is fragmented into warring factions (Brecht & Willett, 1978). Furthermore Debord (1994) suggests that in societies where modern conditions are the focus of being, life becomes "an immense accumulation of spectacles", (p. 5) where escapism is easy to accept for individuals in uninteresting, objectified, and unfulfilling lives. Media and the spectacle become the unfulfillable promise that we can "extend and enlarge our organic sense lives into our environment" (McLuhan, 1961, n.p.) via our symbolic participation in it. Facebook™ is the subsequent glamor forced into the discourse of difference, reinforced via classed and raced ways in media. Berger (2008) suggests this "glamorization" as a tool for stratification does not exist without prevalent emotional connection to widespread personal social envy. Media then can be seen as both a discriminating and unifying force; unifying people with similar social class, race, gender, style, body images, positioning them within a glamor hierarchy suggesting that we can change ourselves to fit the ideal in the unending quest for glamor. The student as value added measure then becomes filed away on a corporate server, where his or her relationships, spending habits, social network, sexuality, and spending power are tracked. Ultimately, he or she is enticed with whatever fetish the corporate icons can target. Sensationalized news media promotes the fear of alienation and segregation, negating a mutual or communal democracy. The mother tongue, McLuhan (1961) suggests, becomes advertising. News outlets like Fox and CNN do whatever they can to keep us ensnared in the spectacle by delivering subtle yet



propagandizing messages. Fox news allows a certain unity as a mechanism for alienation of one group and the indoctrination of another. It has a permanent site dedicated to the “War on Christmas” (Anonymous, 2013) allowing the oppressor to feel justified in their oppression through targeted rage. The webpage identifies communities in which a diversity of religious icons is represented, Christian icons are removed for religious neutrality in public settings. It marginalizes individual voices while inciting hate and fear in the national discourse toward the other.

Additional forms of coercion confuse and suggest information that has no factual basis: “Is Obama a Muslim?” It is just a question, yet the delivery implies factuality. Consider the following: “Palestinian terrorists attack Israeli forces.” Criticality is unnecessary, reality is constructed for the viewer who internalizes insinuation as fact. In the preceding sentence Palestinian *is* terrorist:

No longer is science asked to understand the world, or to improve any part of it. It is asked instead to immediately justify everything that happens....spectacular domination has cut down the vast tree of scientific knowledge in order to...make itself a truncheon. (Debord, 1990, p. 40); What is false creates taste, and reinforces itself by knowingly eliminating any possible reference to the authentic. And what is genuine is reconstructed as quickly as possible, to resemble the false. (Debord, 1990, p. 50)

Individuals are afraid, misinformed, or ideologized, while anti-intellectual sensationalism provides comfort and community replacing reason. Human relatedness via discourse is dying, and “soon so too will be those who knew how to speak” (Debord, 1990, chapter X). They are meant to condemn the world without having to entertain discourse or disagreement. The conditions for the objective nationalistic ontology, to which consciously or not most are invested, slowly subsumes. That is, the elimination of humanity, the commodification of people and the co-opting of the spirit polarize as they foster the “us and them” dynamic, effectively limiting critical thinking and agency. As these conditions alter the socio-political environment by matching the hegemonic rhetoric, media imparts “unique ratios of sense perception...when these ratios change, men change” (McLuhan, Fiore, & Agel, 2001, p. 41). Subsequent media reordering and filtering blur the line between the “psychic and physical” and are the extension of the greater coercive discourse around being. In creating the world of understanding, what is entertainment and what is education are purposefully isolated to affect humans at different orders of consciousness. This allows the tired mind to rest rather than critique social media, since what they view is only entertainment, they can relax and enjoy the programming. The tactic has been employed for years by Disney™ and other “entertainment” sources and is a source of both entertainment and education of the young (McLuhan, & Stearn, 1969).

### **Metamorphosis**

Human beings become fetishized objects, products that may be bought and sold on the global market. Information exists as a predictor of human experience. Where one is born, goes to school, marries, and lives can be articulated statistically. That is, we are quantified as we plug in to the global capitalist network. Man exists, as a “Spock-like mutant” (Latour, 1993, p. 115) resembling a human existence [yet not existing]. Ironically, one of our greatest composers would argue, “The oldest, truest, most beautiful organ of music, the origin to which alone our music owes its being, is the human voice” (Wagner, 1995, p. 122). Yet living becomes finding our “self” in a perverted system. A system working to keep us ignorant of what we can be,

instead focusing on who we are “supposed” to be. Bertolt Brecht (1974) further suggests that in this way the unexamined life is merely *finessing* the ways we are positioned as human beings.

“Mutantization” or quasi-objectification, our metamorphosis, is easily identifiable in dominant discourse around social issues. The media’s positioning of Muslim-as-terrorist and reports around U.S. military deaths places value on us, U.S. citizens, while minimizing the value of “foreign” life (excluding Western Europe of course). Every U.S. death is cited as a tragedy, while headlines for drone strikes read, “More suspected al Qaeda militants killed as drone strikes intensify in Yemen” (Jamjoom, Smith-Spark, & Starr, 2013). In the same article two Yemeni civilian deaths were reported but only as an afterthought, as if these lives were worth sacrificing for the deaths of the militants. Similarly, the U.S. frames its imperialistic incursions as in defense of freedom or fighting terrorists. When Russia invaded Ukraine, it was met with outrage, though Russia’s justification was also the wellbeing and freedom of its citizens. This was not in the economic or political interests of the US, we are told Russian President Vladimir Putin is overly aggressive and power hungry he needs to be stopped. Ironically, the U.S. and Russia are two of the largest perpetrators in the world of civil rights violations against their own people. In *The Threepenny Opera*, Brecht & Manheim (2007) identified and critiqued this phenomena as he wrote, “the law is simply and solely made for the exploitation of those who do not understand it or of those who, for naked need, cannot obey it” (p. 74).

In our quest for truth tied to human capital we have eliminated humanity as an aim of being. Bruno Latour (1993) asked us to rethink our mental landscape, eliminating the minor divisions that separate Westerners from other collectives. We agree that the object/subject positioning of persons is unusable and suggest teachers and students must consider a new understanding of the classroom and approach to knowledge (Latour, 1993). Brecht (1970) called the masses to fight for humanity, suggesting it is those who are seen as innocent that are actually among the guiltiest because they are not acting on what they know about the social consciousness of humanity. In the song, “In Praise of the Fighting”, Brecht (1970) suggested the strongest of us fight their whole lives, “they are the indispensable ones”, and others might fight for an hour, or for many years, but some (the innocent) don’t fight at all. Humanity, then, becomes Kafka’s (2002) bug, lying in state, yet fed by the acquiescence of the masses.

### **Social Frame: Revolution and the Light Exchange**

The normalization of power, the structures needed to carry out domination across a global capitalist stratosphere, is embedded in the architecture of global capitalist schooling. People exist as pawns on a chessboard, their lives routinely displaced with every move in their lifespan calculated toward hyper-consumption by the capitalist elite. A lifetime of normalization, conditioning ensures we step over homelessness as we encounter it in the streets. Every textbook, grade-book, and guide-book is the invisible hand of authority clamping down on the throat of creativity. Consider historical examples of violence, the state burning people at the stake, the state exercising dominion over foreign lands, and the state turning a blind eye, when young men are gunned down by older men with badges. Nothing short of a structural and personal revolution is needed for a critical humanist reconceptualization of the subjectivity that is of being.

We don’t engage homelessness, except as a service project, or police state violence unless it directly affects our livelihood. What we mean is we are removed from our ability to continue accessing those things that define us in society. We have discussed the “*human*

emancipation” that is only achieved “by declaring the revolution to be *permanent*” (Marx & Engles 1975). As Dunayevskaya (1982) suggested, human beings alone can address and continue the revolutionary dialectic, and it must be perpetual in both theory and practice. In the dialectic she challenges us to develop centers around the ideas needed in response to the continually changing world or the “revolution in permanence” (Dunayevskaya, 1982). Undoubtedly and unfortunately, society remains transfixed, secured to the capitalist treadmill, with individuals driven towards accumulation as existence: being-as-function of the socio-capitalistic machine, always running but rarely stepping off for an authentic experience (Postone, 1993). Furthermore, Dunayevskaya (1958) suggested man wants to change the course of human existence so he/she can express all-the natural and acquired powers in activities fit for human beings, which becomes difficult because the spectacle, commodification of spirit, fear, and structural policy make it challenging for the public to decipher what is in their and humanity’s best interest; this positions people to find action difficult. Peter Hudis (2012) also suggested the first step is transcending inactivity as a philosophy of Revolution rather than a revolution of philosophy. Humanity must “form... human resistance to the “classification” of our souls, our lives, our relationships with others and social life” and avoid the “re-appropriation of such knowledge by the oppressed” (Allman, McLaren, & Rikowski, 2000, p. 20).

In *Existential Encounters for Teachers*, Maxine Green (1967) calls for sensibilities to establish a basis for an encounter with existence. A reconsideration of the purpose of schooling is more than necessary for these sensibilities to formally exist, it is imperative. Currently, sensibilities are fostered in one course of study, while they are eliminated in other settings. In *The Dialectic of Freedom*, Greene (1988) contends that the teacher in search of her/his own freedom is the only kind of teacher who can help students in their quest for their own freedom. The revolution in permanence and changing conception of education and ideology become communal efforts as we struggle for a subjective, yet shared, humanity.

Finally, Allman, McLaren, and Rikowski (2000) warn us of situating hope as an abstraction in which humanity exists in a utopian ideal. Humans are not perfect. In striving for humanity we must consider that we will fail, falling short of objective consciousness around this notion. Humans have the capacity to be perfectly imperfect, to be in the world, to learn what is possible in it as they bring forth the effort to grow toward praxis that is informing a self – personal and social transformation via experience. Our commitment to humanizing teaching, democracy, and being are the sustenance of revolutionary change (Allman, McLaren, & Rikowski, 2000).

### **The Condition of Things: Human as Moral Object**

As mentioned above education is control. Education reproduces the conditions for what seems a natural caste system. One power is unable to recreate without the aid of normalized subjects, and people marry objectivity to actualizing the global capitalist definition of human being. Cultural markers such as freedom, enjoyment, and democracy are articulated in the spectrum of limited global capitalist possibility, “we feel free because we lack the very language to articulate our un-freedom” (Žižek, 2002, p. 2). We experience cultural amnesia as we unlearn freedom, enjoyment, or democracy in the imagined lives prescribed by the state. What we mean is classical conditioning-acquiring cultural codes via textbook or lessons learned in school-massages our understanding of democracy, enjoyment or freedom. Our participation in our own

education or lives is limited by a grasp of self as moral object. We live the life prescribed by the state, as we accept the right ways to do and be.

Symbolic interactions then create the condition by which a human is allowed to exist as a moral being in humanity. Real action resists the symbolic because it fools us into believing hegemony is normal, or just by passively accepting its wishes we are absolved from the dehumanization it engenders (Lacan, 1988). Furthermore, in the language of capitalism, we both identify ourselves and lose ourselves in our interactions. This dynamic allows humans to “lie in the guise of truth” (Žižek, 2009, p. 85) which forms the human-as-object dynamic, in the struggle to *be* in the constants of ideology and truth. Yet even those who recognize this lack of freedom to mobilize the sufficiently ideologized masses are trapped in a psychic prison of their own existence. By accepting this mental derangement, that humans can be reduced to commodity, we reduce others to what Hegel (1807/1977) articulates as their accepted place and rank.

The paradox is “the subject must freely choose the community to which he already belongs, independent of his choice—*he must choose what is already given to him,*” however, “the point is that he is never actually in a position to choose: he is always treated *as if he had already chosen*”. We suggest there is nothing ‘totalitarian’ about it; “the subject who thinks he can avoid this paradox and really have a free choice is a *psychotic* subject” (Žižek, 1989, p. 186). What is given to us are the conditions by which we agree to structure thought. Language and verbal systems are both the vehicle by which we express subjective individuality, and the obstacle to our expression of it. And so, knowledge is both governed and paralyzed by language (Foucault, 1971, p. 298). Further situating us in an objective epistemological consciousness is what Foucault (1971) called episteme, the epistemological space represented by a particular time period and within a particular discipline. Lack of consciousness of our space within the episteme is human conditioning. Individuals become unable to situate their consciousness outside the episteme and socially constructed objective realities developed in school, they lose parts of themselves in the socio-cultural codes they are forced to adopt.

Our naming of shared experience acts as universal “positive unconsciousness”. It is this which is developed in us while our communal perceptions are removed. We are unable to, as Hegel (1807/1977) suggests, grasp the objects of the world as we strive for existence in a structure which provides us false perceptions of being. Our collective consciousness provides, for most people, the structure for a broken collective spirit while divesting from spirit the means with which to separate from objectification. This creates the human as object to other subjects. As individuals, humans engage in Hegel’s (1807/1977) “life and death” struggle for recognition in others. This is received superficially and inadequately in contemporary epistemology, fostering conditions to perpetuate the master slave dialectic while perpetuating the perception of freedom. Continual isolation and belief in gods, government, money, and their juxtaposition to the other as inferior cement our living condition within the concrete of objective consciousness (Kosík, 1976).

## Conclusion

Modernity offered human beings an assurance of *Truth*. The possibilities for the age of man and his descendants were endless; they could quantify and split the atom. Diseases could be cured, technology would ensure all would enjoy never before experienced leisure time and entertainment. War would at long last come to an end, as partnerships emerged among the

world's nations. Evidence of the mediation of modernity across human conduct can be found in the world wars, in mass slaughter, famine and other forms of deprivation. The inability of capitalism to halt wholesale slaughter provides a window into the soul of global capitalist intervention.

Schooling has become the revolutionary battleground for the physical and conscious being of humanity. The human spirit becomes a commodity, like money, wielded by the global capitalist hegemony to promote its aims. Consciousness is structured as to make isolation inevitable and objectification required. To achieve these Capitalistic conditions, the human spirit should be divorced from full communal engagement with the other. We become tantalized by the spectacle of society and live in a world created for us, orphaned from personally constructed ways of being and co-created conditions. This existence becomes an inescapable part of our rigidly structured educational systems whose outcomes are embedded in a system dominated by the achievement of social capital for utility within the coercive structure. Gatekeeping apparatuses preclude agency and understanding as they articulate schooling's semipermeable layers of systematic exploitation. A culture of anti-intellectualism and disinformation ensure those layers remain in place, as human beings are easily exploitable.

The lines between realities and humanities have been distorted to the point of mass confusion. In our hysteria, we forsake ourselves, our students, and understandings for the illusion of a global capitalist order and moral superiority. The function of beings sufficiently ideologized does not aid us in escaping from our own reality, but instead creates a social reality tied to capitalist mediation of experience. Furthermore, we are insulated and isolated from the realities shaping the existence of our students. Writing in the time of communist/capitalist tension during the Cold War, Buber's suggestion speaks to our current condition, "the real struggle is not between East and West, or capitalism and communism, but between education and propaganda" (as cited in Hodes, 1972, p. 135). People must learn to conceive of their existence beyond the, what many would consider, modern comforts of being. What we mean is people cannot be bothered to conceptualize existence outside modern Americana, to live, hope, and buy. Hope is not the negation of capitalism or the negation of the self as an instrument of capital, it is the unlearning of our place in the global market, while accepting a deliberate and self-actualized place in existence. It is through the mechanisms of the spectacle that we can see through the fabric of our limited yet powerful existence. As Buber (1923/2010) points out, "all real living is meeting. We cannot avoid using power (and) cannot escape the compulsion to afflict the world, so let us, [be] cautious in diction and mighty in contradiction" (p. 25). Revolution, as he suggests, may only be permanent in the negation of power as we accept the other [and love our communal existence] for, as he describes, we must "love powerfully" (Buber, 1969, p. 45).

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**Arturo Rodriguez** is Associate Professor of Literacy, Language and Culture at Boise State University. Arturo's work focuses in critical theory/pedagogy, humanism, and applied linguistics.

**Kevin Magill** is a Doctoral Student of Social Studies Curriculum and Instruction. Kevin's teaching and research interests focus on critical theory/pedagogy in the social studies, critical humanism, and social justice. He currently works as an Instructor and Facilitator for Student Teacher experiences at The University of Texas at Austin.

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