

Education, Paideia and Democracy: Experiences of the U.S. Educational System

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Today there are few thinking people who would deny that the public school system in the United States of America is broken and cannot be reformed.^[1] The failures of public schooling are variously attributed to the shortcomings of its teachers, its students (and their parents), or its administrators. Rarely is the system of educating our youth seriously questioned by those who educate, and never critiqued by others. We contend that the system of public education is fundamentally flawed; that its purpose is not, as common belief has it, to educate, to enlighten, and thereby to produce citizens who act in both their own and in their society's best interests, that is, citizens for a true democracy. In fact, viewed historically and conceptually, the purpose of public schooling is to produce a mass work force which does not think for itself, but should accept without question the rhetoric and orders of the ruling economic, political, and social elite, who have amassed a concentration of economic and political power. What is needed is to reappropriate a term used in the ancient Greek world, *paideia*; that is, a vision of educating which is an integral part of a genuine democratic society, i.e. a society aiming at individual and social autonomy-- freedom from domination. This has little to do with liberal or social democratic definitions of 'justice', as a granting of a certain fairness or of political rights fought for within the present institutional framework of the market economy and its political complement representative democracy. A democratic society for us implies being free from the domination and manipulation of human over human and human over Nature and this can never be achieved within the system of the market economy and representative 'democracy' with its inherent concentration of economic, social, ecological, and political power.

The essential interconnection of education, paideia, and democracy

Paideia, democracy and emancipatory education –i.e. education that aims at securing the transition from the present miseducation to paideia (which presupposes institutions of an inclusive democracy– form an inseparable whole. This whole is forged upon an essential relationship –an internal dynamic– in which emancipatory education paideia and democracy rely upon each other for their full development. It is through this essential interconnection that a society becomes emancipated, democratic, and autonomous. Apprehending the interconnectedness of these elements is an act of liberation and the opening for the development of democratic consciousness .

Education, paideia, and democracy aim at and choose social and individual autonomy in the sense of enabling people to govern themselves at the social and individual levels. A genuine aim proceeds from a factor that determines a choice of acting. It is different from a choice that is imposed upon from the outside. An authentic aim derives autonomous individuals. An autonomous society (comprised of autonomous individuals) is a genuine free society. Education leads to continual education by connecting and securing democracy and paideia. This arises in a society whose institutions and social intercourse is mutual in equitably distributed interests. In such a society education, paideia, and democracy form an inseparable whole. This whole is organized as an essential relationship, because a society which claims to be democratic must secure the equal distribution of economic and political power, otherwise it is ridiculous to talk about education as aiming at social and individual autonomy. It is through this essential interconnection that a democratic society develops. Apprehending the internal dynamic of education, paideia, and democracy alludes to the free growth of each one's own experience. However, teachers, politicians, priests, parents, judges, police, cultural heroes and entertainers, students, bosses, workers, mass media, etc. adopt the rhetoric of the ruling elite and accept the current dominant social paradigm [2] and enforce, personally and institutionally, these ruling values, beliefs, and ideas. As it happens in neoliberal modernity society is driven by two main components of the dominant social paradigm: the market economy and representative democracy as the only possible form societies can have. The structural foundations of the market economy and representative democracy are hierarchical and heteronomous. Therefore, schools, as one of many societal institutions, are hierarchical institutions where teachers can only teach a curriculum based on the dominant social paradigm, where the act of each student is commanded by the teacher. The creative capacities of the student are not taken into account, so it is nonsense to talk of educating in the sense of developing the individuals' capability to be autonomous, i.e. –as the word implies—to give oneself laws, to self-govern. These ruling ideas and values of society as Marx and Engels have shown subject those to it who have no voice. [3]

Unlike commodities serially replaced in a market-based society autonomy cannot be derived from consumption. To believe that it can as the market economy and representative democracy presuppose is the result of erroneous thinking borne by the economic and political elite that the ends justify the means which lack an intrinsic continuity. The rulers of such a lopsided society benefit from the unequal concentration of economic, political and educational power. This exploitation is also the primary function and aim of contemporary public education or miseducation, since the ends of education are externally imposed. Teachers, administrators, and boards of education manipulate the curriculum in maintaining personal, class interests and consequently the status quo. Those people who choose to accommodate themselves to such nihilistic tendencies of the institutionalized concentration of power have vested interests in fighting against the development of an inclusive democracy and the possession by citizens of the knowledge required for the task of preserving democracy.

Paideia is a political and a moral act in the sense of imbuing children with the democratic values implied by the fundamental principles of democratic organization, ie the principle of autonomy and the principle of community. [4] It is the way a society educates for individual and social autonomy and the responsibilities of each citizen acting both individually and in concert with others in establishing the democratic framework for the equal distribution of political and economic power. Education frees individual capacities

for the social aim of widening of shared interests by breaking down class, ethnic, and gender barriers. It is only through education leading to action that a democratic society overthrows hierarchy and exogenous dependencies. Knowledge and therefore education plays a key role in the struggle for autonomy. Democracy is more than a procedural form of government as in a representative democracy. Democracy is a way of life that provides the public space for the equal development of both the individual and community by calling everything (traditions, religions and any exogenously given values) into question. The struggle to create democratic institutions and paideia is the precondition for democratic forms that provide for direct participation of everyone in self-government. These democratic values derived autonomously without the necessity of a spiritual, dogmatic or objective connection give shape to a unique social paradigm; for, the transitive qualities of education, paideia, and democracy allows for and makes use of the broadest, most inclusive and critical intersubjective experiences in decision-making. Such a democratic paideia is essential for political and economic equality.

If the current United States system of public schooling claims to enhance social, political, and economic equity in closing the gap in educational access, expectations and results for the most advantaged and disadvantaged people of society then consider these brutal realities found in the 2004 Annual Report of Teachers College, Columbia University:

- Thirteen percent of African-American children are born with low birth weight—double the rate for whites. The infant mortality rate for African-Americans is double that of the white population.
- Median black family income is 64% of median white family income —and median black family net worth is only 12% of the white family worth.
- Twenty percent of low-income children are without consistent health insurance, versus 12% of all U.S. children. Thirteen percent of black children are without health insurance, versus 8% of white children. Approximately 42 million people are without health-care coverage. Black pre-schoolers are one-third less likely than whites to get standard vaccinations. Low income children have dangerously high blood levels of lead at five times the rate of middle-class children. Some 8 million schoolchildren are taking psychotropic drugs to control their alleged emotional and intellectual disorders.
- African-American students are three times more likely than whites to be placed in special education programs, and only half as likely to be in gifted programs.
- By age three, children of professionals have vocabularies nearly 50% greater than those of working-class children, and twice as large as those of children on welfare.
- By the end of fourth grade, African-American and Latino students, and poor students of all races, are two years behind their wealthier, predominately white peers in reading and math. By eighth grade, they have slipped three years behind and by twelfth grade four years behind.
- One in three African-American males will be incarcerated in state or federal prison at some point in their lives. The rate is higher for those black males who do not finish high school. For Hispanic males, the rate is one in six, for white males, one in seventeen.

More can be added to this list, but the point is that these criminal policies of the ruling oligarchy cannot continue. Until these crimes are openly discussed, debated and acted upon by democratic decision-making, society will experience further decay. Those victims of the market economy and representative democracy are effectively taken out of the

decision-making process—even if this is the pseudo decision-making process that representative ‘democracy’ secures for the people. On the way into jail or prison inmates are told they lost the right to vote, but on the way out they are not told they can re-register to vote. This multidimensional crisis precipitated by anti-democratic, authoritarian, and hierarchical forces decide political, cultural and economic policies reproducing the unequal concentration of power. The two main institutions of the present system-- the market economy and representative democracy-- and the ideologies and culture backing them which form the dominant social paradigm are opposed to paideia, education and democracy.

Curriculum of the Ruling Elite

In the struggle to determine the economic, political, ecological and social management of society the ruling elite promotes its views in the linking of representative democracy and the market economy as the best and only way to establish prosperity. In fact, the goal of the ruling elites in maintaining their hegemony is the miseducation and the deskilling of a vast segment of the population. The authoritarian culture of the ruling elites requires obedience, conformity, and acquiescence of the general populace. To achieve this end, the ruling elites promulgate a class based curriculum that not only adapts and adjusts students into “good little boys and girls” using the so-called “dumbing-down” curriculum with its recycling of knowledge but also indoctrinates pupils into representative politics by determining whom in society will become the next generation of benefactors, watchdogs, and guardians of the continually growing unequal distribution of resources. The repressions generated from this project are the motor that reproduces narcissistic gratification and one-sided concentration of power in maintaining the planetary market economy. The neoliberal curriculum produces efficient students who can function competently and competitively (read: success) who will legitimize the consistency between the dominant social paradigm and the existing institutional framework. The values of neoliberal ideology of the past thirty years do not only express a structural refitting by the market economy into the New World Order, but also necessitate a structural reorientation of education from ware-housing students to instituting a minimum security apparatus. Under this new program, public education maintains its repressive orientation (“Someone has to keep an eye on them.”).

It is no accident Margaret Spellings is now the U.S. Secretary of Education following her fellow Texan, Rod Paige, at the position, who accused the National Education Association as a “terrorist organization.” Spellings career ran through Texas state government serving as an education reformer with the intent to “improve” Texas schools. When Bush was selected President (Sandra Day O’Connor was the swing vote giving the U.S. Supreme Court authority to stop the vote recount in Florida in 2000 handing Bush the Presidency.), she became his assistant for Domestic Policy. Her major accomplishment was as an architect in the crafting of the regressive No Child Left Behind Act.

When Congress passed and President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 it spelled the doom of public education. The war at home continues as NCLB has written into it sanctions to be placed on failing schools which guarantees their continual failure. A failing public education is a neoliberal goldmine which opens the door to privatization. NCLB establishes absurd standards that cannot be attained. One of its discriminatory standards requires “children with learning disabilities and behavioral disorders no matter how profound...to perform at grade level by holding teachers

accountable for doing what medical science never accomplished; namely, curing mental retardation.”^[5] NCLB requires impossible test standard requirements for students and idiotic professional standards for teachers and administrators. If the whole school population does not meet the standard, the school will lose its annual federal funding, which can be millions of dollars. NCLB is a dictatorial imposition from the federal government down to the student. In such an ultimate imposition none is free.

Another trap in NCLB is a military recruitment policy. Section 9528 requires high schools to give Type I student information which is: name, address and telephone number of each student to the Pentagon. The Pentagon then sends this information to local military recruiters. If a high school refuses to hand over this information the school will lose its federal funding. Through the federal government student privacy is in jeopardy. This act of black mail already expands upon measures already in place that allow military recruiters access to students. Military recruiters are high pressure salespeople with unlimited access to minors and will go to no end in recruiting them with false promises of job training and money for college. Poor rural districts and hopeless inner cities with working class communities and communities of color are the impoverished places where recruiters like to prowl and prey with their ghetto Humvees and slick ad campaigns. War criminal George Bush uses this economic draft in these depressed areas luring our youth to fight his perpetual war. Giving military recruiters access to student information has no educational value. How will giving this information help improve students’ test scores or grades in various subject areas?

Education and Miseducation

At present public education is a management problem. Public school principals acting like plant managers, CEOs or monarchs regard human nature as an object to be controlled, disciplined, and directed in order to maintain the plant, corporation or fiefdom safe and clean for the insemination (reproduction) of educational inequality. Although the rhetoric confirms otherwise, in the name of education, democracy, and the children, this type of objectification seeks the exclusion and absence of the Other, hence no opposition in the forming of educational policies. Reason, as critical thinking, is lost, and thoughtless concession to authority becomes the norm. Since paideia is a political and moral act in the sense defined above, this thoughtless miseducation may be clearly seen as undemocratic and therefore immoral.

The public school student readily internalizes the cultural values this program of miseducation teaches without critically examining the meaning and values of the market economy, where neoliberal values have *a priori* been affixed and affirmed by what is purported to be a “good” and “reasonable” logic and consensus. Socialization in capitalist society begins with the homogenization and standardization of tastes in newborns fed with Simulac and prefabricated uniform nipples. People are prepared to accept any pabulum or false need capitalists deem marketable. Learning to put out of play cultural market values imbibed from infancy is the first wrenching step toward education and away from the interests of mystification, totalitarianism, social control, and concentration of power to which our current pedagogy subscribes.

Whatever knowledge the public gains from education changes nothing. Acting upon what one knows and understands is the challenge one must accept in bringing about economic,

social, political, and ecological autonomy. An education that does not strive for the fullest and most thorough understanding of the world will be the handmaiden of elites who will always make pedagogical decisions. Authoritarian principles in education will never be removed if teachers continue to teach what are in the words of John Dewey, “certain collections of fixed, immutable subject matter that they were taught which they in turn transmit to students under them. The educational regimen thus consists of authorities at the upper end handing down to the receivers at the lower end what they must accept. This is not education but indoctrination, propaganda. It is a type of ‘education’ fit for the foundations of a totalitarian society and, for the same reasons, fit to subvert, pervert and destroy the foundations of a democratic society.” [6]

Education is immoral if it is merely connected with gaining manual or technical skills for getting a job or being employable. Achieving a deepening of intelligence based on knowledge, self-reflection, and deliberation is a curriculum students need to become autonomous. This curriculum emphasizes the need for an institutional framework based on the equal distribution of political and economic power and shared common interests, and interaction between varied groups. Education for autonomy breaks with the present socialization process in order to free the student to place societal laws, values, beliefs, and ideas into question. Where there is no questioning there is no educating, only reaffirmations of beliefs-- habitual conveniences that adhere to the rhetoric of the fear of the unknown and ignorance of what can be known. Education is an interrogating that re-opens foundations and perspectives that have been hidden by affirmations of belief. The question re-gathers or discovers the individual’s genuine thinking by pulling the questioner out of the mud of taken-for-granted thinking, thereby re-valuing dogmatic beliefs. “If a question is posed existentially, as a detachment of everyday meanings, its reference to what ‘matters’ to the questioner is not to ‘what he is’ as a substance but ‘how he is’ or where he ‘finds himself,’ and this reference is also brought into question. Thus the questioner as such is involved in the question and thereby dislocated from his previous place.” [7] In such an emancipating pedagogy egocentrism, narcissist certainties, and accumulation of experiences are put into question. Democracy is founded on a self-reflective choice and on institutional arrangements which secure the equal sharing of political and economic power. Public spaces called schools must provide the fundamental principles and aims of how society is organized as a democratic institution on the basis of of autonomy and community and the complementary values.

Egocentrism and Education

American youths are formally educated within an acculturative industry that grafts students to interests and tasks entirely determined by the market economy and representative democracy cleverly disguised as choice and participation. Beginning in primary school, students are led into consumer society by accepting the linking of the market economy with representative democracy. Egocentrism is built into the system upon the accumulation of desires that are never satisfied in obtaining its objects of desire, and seeks more and more gratification in more and more consumer objects. Rather than attempting to discover the grounds of those values, the public cultigen enthusiastically awaits the next generation of distractive novelties. The consumer becomes an avid buyer, observer, tool, guinea pig, and resource for further manipulation. Socialized into the world by mass consumer society and carried into adult life by a variety of cultural industries inflating ego-centrism, students are a captured audience for economic exploitation.

Indeed, they become so captivated that their own lives become enmeshed in the pursuit of false dreams of monetary success. This miseducation leads students away from democracy and equality and into a society of economic exploitation, totalitarianism, and inequality. A student's fund of knowledge is displaced by a fund of fashionade consumerism, as the students themselves are initiated into an inner subjective standard wholly inscribed as a consumer. These coerced, privatized selves mistakenly assume their behavior as fulfilling the American Dream, whereas the neoliberal ideology of the market economy and representative democracy makes them poorer.

Description of Application of Definitions

The struggles for freedom within human history illustrate that the ruling elites understand how human nature can be used against itself as a wedge for increasing human exploitation. Conventional morality using mass psychology and propaganda techniques makes it easier to manage the masses against themselves and their interests. The oligarchy never takes upon themselves the blame for the multidimensional crisis we face. In response, the masses deliver their herd conformity into their guardians' hands. Students are given false standards of freedom of expression and assemblage, because if they exercise those freedoms they learn they are quickly compromised.

Ruling Elites and Homogenization

Ruling elites' interests and heteronomous values can be overcome by replacing the unequal distribution of economic, political, and social power with a confederation of local forms of direct democracy where everyone, regardless of ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation participates directly in decisions affecting the community. The goal of society must be the replacement of ethics comprised of values situated outside (exogenous) the individual or community—and therefore lost to any sense of paideia—with the ethics of inclusive democracy^[8]. Society has settled into a hierarchy of power under the sway of a faulty reasoning that establishes pseudo problems, which conveniently confuse effects as causes of the multidimensional crisis by blaming the victims. For example, the solution to the gang problem is to institute curfews for youth and crackdowns on gangs. Communities must become self-reliant and not dependent on outside sources for their organization. Self-reliance is meant, as Fotopoulos states, "...in terms of autonomy, rather than in terms of self-sufficiency."^[9] Without autonomy, the individual becomes homogenized into conformity obtaining a consistency best appropriated as an object of the system reproducing social, economic, ecological, and political inequalities (one size fits all). Homogenization gives a false sense of community in an increasingly pervasive surveillance system. No longer being the subject of their own experiences and denied a reflexive democratic consciousness people appropriate images, values, perceptions, and symbols derived and accessible from above and outside themselves. This homogenized, heteronomous, and predictable consistency as Emerson stressed, "...is the hobgoblin of small minds."^[10]

Linking Democracy and the Market Economy

The economic elites are linked to government through representative democracy. Since the interests of the U.S. Congress correspond to the interests of the market economy in

maintaining private control of politics and the economy, the U.S. has been forged into a fascist oligarchy whose dictatorship and interests do not coincide with the interests of democracy, education and paideia.

The idea of freedom that the oligarchy attests is the freedom to do whatever one wants with out doing harm to others. However, the bad faith of this freedom, meshed with the market economy is perverse, since it ignores the fact that we face a multidimensional crisis – a direct result of the kind of ‘freedom’ we enjoy– where people are being harmed. Also, the liberal oligarchic idea of freedom that treats everyone as a private individual is based on the separation of society from the economy and polity, ie on the separation of individuals themselves. How can everyone be equally free in a hierarchy or liberal oligarchy? They are free and on an equal footing to manipulate, dominate, and exploit others, who are considered rivals with conflicting egocentric interests. People are brought together in competition rather than in cooperation in finding a living. Marx, commenting on the individual’s private interest and limited freedom in *On the Jewish Question* writes, “The only bond between men is natural necessity, need and private interest, the preservation of their property and their egoistic persons.”^[11] The illusion of political freedom granted by the neoliberal nation has nothing to do with democratic values; furthermore it secures the strategy of keeping people individualized, privatized, and separated. The ruling ideas are also given a spiritual connection that provides for the further justification for the current system of domination.

On the U.S. one dollar bill is found the Latin phrases *Annuit Coeptis*, “He has blessed our undertaking” and *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, “a New Order of the Ages.” In this undertaking political freedom presupposes private enterprise and the market economy where the private individual treats others as means with the approval of god. God and religion are used to control people and the economy. Those in power use god and service to god as an excuse to justify god’s blessing in accumulating wealth as the fruit of one’s labor whether it is killing indigenous peoples for their land and resources or exploiting the labor of others.

The U.S. ruling elites retain their position and control through the ideology of consistency between representative democracy and market economy while their rhetoric engages in hiding alienation, miseducation and totalitarianism.

In public schooling, where students are subordinated to following rules and regulations, learning becomes meaningless. Learning manipulated by external reinforcement is indoctrination. Students are indoctrinated into the hierarchy of values and inequalities represented by the market economy and representative democracy. This hierarchical theory of education views students as those who must be told what to do and how to it in their mindless quest to become good consumers.

Authoritarian and Non-Authoritarian Education

Authoritarian orders of education (i.e. the present system of miseducation) demand students open books, do homework, follow directions and do not ask intelligent questions. This pernicious pedagogy considers the students’ will as an object, thus lending itself to the project of molding the student into an obedient citizen. On the other hand, in non-authoritarian education, the pedagogical order takes the student as already willing; that is, willing to open a book, willing to study, and willing to ask questions. This educating is a

critical dialogue with current values with the aim of providing the conditions that provoke students to pose questions. Through questioning students generate new perspectives and situations on their cultural values and experience. A curriculum for critical education examines the hierarchy of power in human relations and how society and history are made (and can be remade) by human interaction. Learning is apprehending the interconnections among things and not merely knowing facts in isolation. By peeling off surface meanings and images, a curriculum can be oriented to gaining insight into commercial media, economic propaganda, and political disinformation, leading students to see the impact on their lives and the hierarchical structures that limit democracy such as sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, patriarchy, racism, corporate monopoly and bureaucratic control over institutions.

Education refers to refraining from vagaries and to come to decisions based upon the common interest of all community members. Miseducation refers to the mere acceptance and conviction of misleading explanations for the way things are. The miseducated rely on sentiment rather than reason in forming decisions. The miseducated prefer to be entertained rather than engaging in a critical consideration of information. To be emancipated is to know that nothing is ready-made or pre-given. Learning is a gradual clarification of concepts that are confusing or unclear or do not make sense. One must choose, investigate and gather as much knowledge as possible in making informed political, social, and economic decisions. The sine qua non of a democracy is that its citizens seek relevant information in questioning their institutions and the values backing them, something that goes beyond the miseducation of authority, habits and repressions reproducing the status quo. Citizens must participate as well-informed members of the community. In this sense democracy is a way of life. However, public opinion, manufactured by the mass media, culled from polls, interviews and questionnaires is skewed. Those who own the media create the illusion that the public supports the legitimacy of the dominant social paradigm. Choosing to place into question existing values and interests can create a space for real alternatives to the current multidimensional crisis. In deliberation, as John Dewey masterfully writes, “each conflicting habit and impulse takes its turn in projecting itself upon the screen of imagination. It unrolls a picture of its future history, of the career it would have if it were given a head...In thought as well as in overt action, the objects experienced in following out a course of action attract, repel, satisfy, annoy, promote and retard. Thus deliberation proceeds. To say that at last it ceases is to say that choice, decisions takes place. What then is choice? Simply hitting in imagination upon an object that furnishes an adequate stimulus to the recovery of overt action...Choice is not the emergence of preference out of indifference. It is the emergence of a unified preference out of competing preferences.”^[12]

The battle for the emancipation of the student begins in the classroom within a wide range of management and pedagogical styles. Rarely is there a classroom or school that has as its curriculum the posing of demystifying questions. Questions and suggestions from students confronting authority are rare or are put down as unrealistic, radical and out of the mainstream. However, teachers will never admit that they do not allow questions that confront existing structures. The students get the message, “communicated quietly, insidiously, relentlessly, and effectively through the structures of the classroom: through the role of the teacher, the role of the student, the rules of their verbal games, the rights that are assigned, the arrangements made for communication, the ‘doings’ that are praised or censored. In other words the medium is the message.”^[13]

The whole community – teachers, administrators, parents, clergy, politicians, and on and on, have come to approve and accept the curriculum that forces children to resist learning. This does not have to be a perennial goal. Those who confuse causes as effects make it into a moral pseudoproblem. According to this illogic the recalcitrant student is the cause of their miseducation. Rather, the recalcitrant student is the effect of miseducation.

The power elites do not want egalitarianism. It is claimed that public schools were established to reproduce democratic values. Yet the reality is that the values of the market economy had a major hand in the planning of schools to be a place where the masses received enough skills to move them into the growing work force needed to run American industry. Class warfare was embedded into the public school system, although the rhetoric claimed the opposite. Public education would be known as the “great equalizer.” Equalizing what? Opportunity? Economic, political, social, ecological equality? To learn nothing together? Horace Mann, viewed education as a mastery of laws to be learned that conform to existing hierarchies. Since manufacturing was becoming the major factor of life in Massachusetts, where he was Secretary of the State Board of Education from 1837-1848, Horace Mann talked about the school as having the same goals and interests of society. “When he (Mann) talked of ‘good habits’ then, he was not merely conforming to what he believed was moral law. He was describing behavior required of compliant workers in factories-offering the poor and jobless what they needed to get in, assuring the owners the literate, disciplined employees they were seeking for the new production lines.”^[14] Public schools were established to keep order among undisciplined and rowdy immigrant children, who were starting to populate overcrowded cities. The principles of assembly-line production and monitoring devices held sway. Students were, “deputized as monitors, each assigned a different task in the activity of instruction, drill, or disciplines...learning lessons or administering tests...other monitors policed the room, carried out punishments, reported wrongdoings, carried messages and instruction for the teacher.”^[15] These methods devised by schools were plainly good business practices.

Yesterday’s educational practice needed to train a semiskilled politically docile workforce. Today, the difference is educational practice needs to train a technically sophisticated politically docile workforce. The current role of public education is to channel and stratify students into subservient economic and political power centers. Neither developing democratic consciousness nor the free and equal participation of all members of society, or the understanding of the complex connections between ideas and actions is the goal of public education. Public education is set up not to challenge elitism and hierarchy in the bigotry and repressive moralisms of the dominant social paradigm. The political dimension of education becomes for the elite, propounding their conservative political agendas, a battleground to keep students, parents, community members and therefore the schools depoliticized.

If innovations in art or in a curriculum of multiple perspectives deviate from the classical canons of western humanism, they are denounced as a surrender of standards. The campaign against political correctness claiming to defend freedom of thought against the tyranny of the Left, actually seeks to limit debate by silencing criticism of racism, sexism, homophobia, and cultural homogenization. Every member of society in whose hands political, economic or social power is concentrated through the present institutional framework has a hatred and fear of genuine democracy. To accept and appreciate the variety and diversity of human experience is truly democratic. Inclusion is a rejection of a

false universalism that seeks to impose a simulacrum of unity obliterating genuine political difference.

The project of education, paideia and democracy has as its goal the breaking of existing political, economic, cultural and ecological power arrangements. These authoritarian forms of domination are difficult to break with because they represent the hierarchy of values elitists and their minions use to justify their privileged positions within a fetid power structure. Through the current dominant social paradigm people are led to believe in the superiority of the values of power and privilege. Economic elites and their team of professional politicians and intellectual guardians maintain their control of public and private institutions in order to further power and privilege. Is the system of the market economy and representative democracy an autonomous system? No. There is no paideia in this system. There is no enlightenment or a flourishing of culture, which simultaneously seeks democracy and autonomy. Remember, the oligarchy rules through representative democracy. By definition there is no democracy, no autonomy and therefore no education in an oligarchic system.

Mass public education or “jail education” molds a consumer, who is frivolous, superficial, mediocre, and invariably prejudiced. The consumer’s major interests coincide with those of the ruling class, and thus can only dream of being an elitist. The public literally does not have to think. Mass propaganda is placed in front it and inscribed into its herd consciousness. Public values are heteronomous and hide from the naïve public the oligarchy, the members of which are neither the best nor the wisest in deciding not only affairs of state, but also day-to-day affairs. Hierarchical and heteronomous values are not consistent with political, social, and economic democracy. It is only through open and equal discussion and decision making that an inclusive democracy can uncover and clarify needs that are not soothed by unlimited growth, progress and a litany of markets. The oligarchy is far removed from the interests of democracy, education and paideia and it is hostile to open public accountability, dialogue or persuasion. The secrecy, misrepresentation and propaganda of the market economy and representative democracy have to be replaced by an inclusive democracy and inquiry into social, economic, political, and environmental policy.^[16] Mass public opinion is diverted from inclusive democracy by novelty and distractions; kept diffused and scattered, the public cannot cohere into a democratic voice. Liberal or conservative makes no difference. An awareness of democratic consciousness is also an argument for persuasion in democratic decision-making, rather than using violence. Public opinion is worked over by the ruling elite into malleable consent.^[17]

The lack of connection between the student’s classroom activities and life outside the school is exacerbated by the inequality they suffer thus providing for a ghetto education. However, since the classroom is not valued as a place of learning, students have brought street values into the classroom. This problem is compounded by teachers of inner city children who, can get away without teaching anything knowing full well their students’ parents will not protest. The fact that a high percentage of students work thirty to thirty-nine hours a week at minimum paying service sector jobs belies the other illusive facts of equal access, opportunity, and the concentration of economic power. The student’s existential situation is entwined with the social reality in which they are born and bred. Increasingly bored and uninterested students are even more susceptible to the mystifications of the market economy that promise difference and status, but deliver

conformity: “If it’s right for you”, “be an individual buy Pond’s.”

So what is the continuity between the child’s received curriculum and the reality outside school? Outside the school the reality is high incarceration, police brutality, gang competition, early death, lack of health care, decent housing and recreation. The education they receive is equal to their surroundings: decayed schools, corrupt and incompetent teachers, pollution, low pay and high crime. In their education there is no application of intelligence to solve problems. The lesson plans of monarchical teachers are filled with tedium and drudgery.

The relations of capitalist production are reproduced and exert their power through the media, schools, family, and community. Struggling against and overcoming the unequal concentration of power can transcend class structures. We cannot adhere to values that are heteronomous but only to those we each have chosen. The level of a person’s democratic consciousness is presumed by their paideia, because paideia is according to the education of the individual as citizen within conditions of freedom and self-determination. Given that democracy is collaboration and conjoining such paideia can only come from the autonomy of the community.

Schools as institutions of inclusive democracy must be free to question the fetters of the dominant social dogma. It is only when students stop, look, scrutinize, and suspend from judgment their taken-for-granted values, that they can place into question the presuppositions of their life-worlds in order to clarify ambiguities, inconsistencies, and contradictions. The general standpoint of paideia is the sum total of all the cultural objects, laws, values, customs, art, science, education and the poise and character of the people or state. The highest goal of paideia is to create the democratic consciousness of explicit self-determination at the social and individual level –and this presupposes the equal distribution of power among citizens. A radical break with the present is needed to make room for new social domain. Disconnecting or putting out of play any presupposition is a goal of education. Husserl describes the judgment put out of action, “It still remains there like the bracketed in the bracket, like the disconnected outside the connexional system.”^[18] A transvaluation takes place as a presupposition is disregarded and a new standpoint becomes possible. By barring usage of any judgment as truth regarding the reality of the world, the student can break with the forms of the dominant social paradigm.

Education is an inquiry unmasking previously hidden phenomena and creates the conditions for paideia. Reversing the role inscribed by institutional structures in order to better understand their workings expands one’s experience against the backdrop of the cultural milieu.

Plato’s Contribution

Plato is no friend to democracy and winds up with an authoritarian rationale for his republic.^[19] However, he does provide us with significant insights on the essence of education in his “Allegory of the Cave.” In the opening line he states, “meta tauta de, eipon, apeikason toioutoi pathei ten hemeteran phusin paideias te peri kai apaideusias.”^[20] Cornford’s translation reads, “Next, said I, here is a parable to illustrate the degrees in which our nature may be enlightened or unenlightened.”^[21] The word Plato uses for enlightenment, culture, knowledge, and education is paideia. He says that the movement

from ignorance to knowledge traverses a course of transformations in the nature of the student. Education for Plato is the gradual and painstaking inquiry that demands, “the soul...be turned around in relation to everything in front of it.”^[22] Remember, the cave dwellers are chained by the neck and legs, so that they cannot turn their heads and are unable to move. The cave dwellers can perceive only what is in front of them as they behold the shadows as reality and echoes as truth. Plato’s paideia establishes an archetype or plastic model in which the constant turning of human nature follows on its arduous and circuitous path to enlightenment. Paideia is an overcoming of what was formerly known to be knowledge (apaideia) by a constant inversion, uprooting, and transplanting of the whole person. This inversion is possible if everything that is commonly known, taken for granted, and the way in which it was known become different. Why? Because the demand ordinary pre-given experience makes is an overpowering force of naïve understanding. This common everydayness is considered by the cave dwellers to be the realm, which alone gives measure to all things and relationships and provides the moral groundwork for directing and organizing the cave-dwellers’ reality. “They may have had the practice of honoring and commending one another with prizes for the man who had the keenest eye for the passing shadows and the memory for the order in which they followed or accompanied one another.”^[23] The silhouettes projected upon the cave wall keep the dwellers’ reality in its power. Consequently, the dwellers think this commonplace region of shadows as the free exploration of experience and judgment. Only a sudden force can free Plato’s cave dwellers. The freed prisoner would be dazzled and pained by seeing things differently in the enlightened sphere and would naturally turn back to the shadows for the comfort offered by their familiarity. Yet, the cave dweller is less confused with what he previously knew, but is more “perplexed.”^[24]

Of course, Plato saw education as a kind of individualistic affair in which enlightenment was feasible, irrespective of the institutional framework within which it happens—a reactionary conclusion in itself. It is obvious that neither paideia is feasible outside a genuine democracy nor an attempt for education is possible when it is cut off from a democratic movement for an inclusive democracy. Nonetheless, the allegory of cave dwellers is important because it shows that paideia cannot be a haphazard affair that fills and crams an empty mind with all sorts of shadows passed off as realities. Care must be taken not to alienate the student, but to nurture those attributes that contribute to the student’s interests and inner poise. Plato’s allegory sets the stage for that process of thought, which supersedes apaideia (shadows and injustice) on the way to paideia.

The educational act provides the conditions that provoke the learner to filter the presuppositions of cultural silhouettes. Education demands students think deeply about the illusory world of notions that hem, jostle, whirl, and oppress them. To perceive the students’ situation as given according to popular consensus and authority requires of students a reversal of their standpoint. Inquiry of this type intends to decipher the foundation and driving forces of students’ thought and milieu, which from birth generalize and standardize the cultural life-world. In other words education is the task from moving out of apaideia- ignorance, injustice, totalitarianism- to paideia- enlightenment, autonomy, democracy. This movement reveals how the categorical shadows determine the what and the how of an individual’s perceptions and cultural identity. This propaganda gathers public and private life experiences, and is very explicit about their content: “this is the way things are run around here!”

Education inquires at the same time into the sources and meanings of the cultural milieu and the questioner. The aim of this inquiry is to bring the questioner into genuine contact with these world contents as they reveal themselves in unbiased disclosure. But this process involves the questioner's dis-location from cultural forces and from the where and the how so that the presuppositions that obscure the validity of these forms and person can be decoded. These cultural forces are ideologies that rationalize and legitimize the status quo. Intentional reflection upon the primacy and false priority of how and what the student knows and takes judgment upon constitute education. Interrogation of this kind leads to something other than education for money-job transactions adhering to instrumental rationalism, social psychologism, and mechanistic models that fix self, society, and knowledge into a specter of uniform formulas upholding the market economy and representative democracy.

Education therefore brings to the fore, by placing in abeyance the presuppositions underlying and governing understanding and comportment, students' valuations. The more students place out of play their valuing presumptions about the world the more obvious they view their obdurate affects on the world. This making-conscious isolates presuppositions, values, and judgments by requiring the suspension of their validity. As long as thinking is continually influenced by the unquestioned prescriptions of teachers, bosses, clergy, parents, and other community members, as part of the consensus-making apparatus for the way things are, students will remain shackled. Presuppositions are constantly functioning unnoticed. It is only when they are jarred from their habitual everydayness do students glimpse their ordering of reality. Paideia puts into question the validity of our presuppositions-- all which give weight to our world.

Autonomous individuals direct their own education. Education becomes purposeful by fostering continuity between the activity and ideas and the student's interest. By giving shape to a new social paradigm, inclusive democracy seeks the equal distribution of social, economic, political and ecological power. In other words inclusive democracy is that form of social organization in which maximum intersubjective experiences are possible. They conjoin to make democratic decisions a reality by questioning the various modes of the unequal distribution of power. There is no political democracy, no social democracy, no economic democracy, and no ecological democracy without reintegrating society with economy, polity and nature, therefore abolishing the concentration of power. Inclusive democracy gets us out of the predicament that the market economy and representative democracy have gotten us into.

Results

The quality removed from the product of the market economy cannot offer any genuine resonance. The capitalists' goal is to use the commodity as a means to turn the planet into a single global market. The world, since the establishment of the market economy about 200 years ago, has been transformed from autonomous communities into heteronomous world markets. Capital's increasing domination of the world pushes ever-faster alienation at all levels of work. Labor is alienated from its product. Because workers cannot recognize this alienation as such, alienation is rejected as a condition of their lives, since everyone believes they are connected and fulfilled by virtue of the commodity. What is needed is a critique, which will not be compromised by the concentration of political and economic power. Organization of leisure time as a critical awareness of the commodity as

consumption is needed to pry us out of the commodities' illusory grip. It is leisure time that offers a place for the self-examination of society. Fetishized commodities over and over again dominate our needs into submission, which are subjugated to the demands of the market economy. Sartre's factory worker uses her own body as a tool for using the machine and creates private, intimate fantasies and daydreams as a reflexive dimension to maintain her integrity; yet machine technology is the non-human which ruptures not only human relations, but also marks a fissure between the woman and herself. In such a way the reflexive relation is destroyed. The machine has taken her over by adjusting her rhythms to its rhythm. In her fantasies the woman has become the object of the machine. This ensuing contradiction in which the woman is no longer the subject of her own experiences forces her into a false identity. ^[25]

The internationalised market economy and representative democracy are the causes of the multidimensional crisis, since their dynamic has led to the present concentration of economic, social, ecological, and political power. The history of the last two hundred years is the attempt to globalize the market economy and its complement representative democracy. Paterson, New Jersey where I live is the first planned industrial city in the U.S. It was incorporated in 1792 by the capitalist Alexander Hamilton as the "Society of Useful Manufactures." The city was built around the mills (market economy) rather than the traditional green (democracy). Thus Paterson was founded as a profit center for capitalist needs rather than the needs of the people. With the "Founding Fathers" introduction of representative democracy and particularly for Alexander Hamilton "there was no incompatibility between democracy and the domination of the economically powerful but in fact was the rule...the fundamental element of modernity: the formal separation of society from the economy and the state. Not only people, as direct producers, were not able to control the product of their work but also, as citizens, were incapable of directly exercising their political power."^[26] Profits over people and representative democracy over direct democracy have a debilitating effect. Today Paterson is an overcrowded, decayed, polluted, corrupt, crime ridden city of minimum wage factory and service sector jobs. Even with a board of education budget of \$510 million serving 25,000 students, the students cannot read proficiently, barely write a coherent paragraph, and lack reasoning skills.

Just as their predecessors, Condoleeza Rice and others in the Bush cabal absolutely link the market economy and representative democracy as the only alternative to a chaotic (terror) world. For them the market economy and representative democracy are the only way to progress, prosperity, and the good life. But, the market economy is incompatible with paideia. The former is competitive, individualized, privatized, hierarchical and heteronomous. The latter is cooperative, latitudinarian, democratic, and autonomous. Likewise representative democracy is incompatible with democracy. The former is the result of people handing over to others their decision-making power, and the latter refers to *demos* as the subject of democracy as the free and equal participation that everyone has in determining and obeying laws. However, since the massive corporatization of America during the 1920's, as John Dewey points out, there began a tremendous discrepancy between economic elites, whose concentration of economic power attained in "manufacture, transportation, distribution who make decisions which determine and affect opportunities, desires and the choices individuals can choose from^[27]" and the public. This "eclipse of the public"^[28] was disconcerting for Dewey. He saw capitalism being linked to democracy. This influence of big money on Congress was a fascist path Dewey thought

should not be followed. It's not difficult to grease the palm of politicians. The corporate agenda determines the values it prefers for society, one that guarantees its place that is likewise fit for societal consumption. This process ensures its perpetuation by linking it to representative democracy and other societal institutions, and thereby massively influencing Congress, the Supreme Court, and the Presidency.

The American public is taught to believe that representative democracy is the essence of democracy itself, and that representative democracy helps to reproduce the values of the market economy as "our way of life." Thus representative democracy and the market economy are linked as the natural outcome, purpose and goal of any society. In fact, the main common element of representative 'democracy' and the market economy is that they both secure the separation of society from polity and the economy respectively, ie that they secure the concentration of political and economic power respectively.

Conclusion

The aim of my contribution is to examine the interrelationship and inner dynamic of education, democracy, and paideia. Paideia is the expression of autonomous community. The aim of education in the transition to an inclusive democracy is to create the conditions which, when internalized by the individuals, will enhance their capacity for becoming autonomous. Without an educated public there can be no democracy. Involved is an inquiry into how autonomous individuals and communities challenge their own institutions and values in order to remain indefinitely open and recognize no ultimate dogma. Inclusive democracy is the site for the broadest and most equal and free development of the individual and community. However, in the struggle for autonomy there are counter forces that seek the concentration of political, economic and social power. Those authoritarian, hierarchical, anti-democratic, heteronomous, and miseducative forces are promulgated through the market economy and its political complement representative democracy. Those controlling these forces are the ruling economic (capitalists) and political (professional politicians) elites, The only way out of the present multidimensional crisis is the building of a mass movement in order to fight for the overthrowing of the institutionalization of the unequal distribution of political, economic, social, and ecological power and for the establishment of an inclusive democracy of equal distribution of power among all people regardless of gender, ethnicity, etc. The inclusive democracy project seeks to replace all the existing structures of power rather than attempting to gain changes or reforms of some institutions from within. Reform and restructuring remain under the spell of the structures of neoliberal modernity: competition, extreme individualism, privatization, the free movement of capital and labor, hierarchy, and consumerism. It is necessary that these structures be replaced by new democratic structures and a new democratic consciousness and conception of citizenship (paideia) that educates for individual and social autonomy, cooperation, and social, economic, political, and ecological equality.

[1] Whole School Reform models are the privatized effects of neoliberal public school restructuring

that began in the early 1990s. All they offer is new names for previously failed programs promising student, parent, and teacher empowerment. WSR has not changed anything and is an abject failure. Furthermore, public education is in the midst of being annihilated by the neoliberal NO Child Left Behind Act.

- [2] The system of beliefs, ideas and the corresponding values which are dominant in a particular society at a particular moment of its history. See Takis Fotopoulos, "[Mass media, Culture and Democracy](#)", *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (March 1999).
- [3] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, ed. C.J. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 1999), p. 64.
- [4] See Takis Fotopoulos, "[Towards a Democratic Liberatory Ethics](#)", *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (November 2002).
- [5] See David Gabbard, et al, "[Saving Public Education, Saving Democracy](#)", *Public Resistance*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (May 1, 2005).
- [6] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, (Chicago: The Swallow Press Inc., 1954).
- [7] Robert D. Cumming, *Starting Point*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 173.
- [8] See Takis Fotopoulos, "Towards a Democratic Liberatory Ethics".
- [9] Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards an Inclusive Democracy*, (London: Cassell, 1997).
- [10] Ralph W. Emerson, "Self-Reliance" in Brooks Atkinson, ed., *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, (New York: The Modern Library, 1940), p. 152.
- [11] Karl Marx, "On The Jewish Question", in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), p. 43.
- [12] John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, (New York: The Modern Library, 1957), pp.179-181.
- [13] Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, (New York: Dell Publishing Co. Inc., 1969), p. 22.
- [14] Maxine Greene, *The Public School and the Private Vision*, (New York: Random House Inc., 1965), p. 23.
- [15] Greene, *The Public School and the Private Vision*, p. 92.
- [16] Vice-President Dick Cheney and the Bush administration fought the public release of minutes of meetings Cheney had with energy officials in March 2001 involved in energy policy making. On May 9, 2005 a federal appeals court ruled with the Bush administration that it did not have to divulge the oil executive names or minutes, since they were not actual voting members of Cheney's panel, the National Energy Policy Development Group. On June 15, 2005 Greg Palast and Harper's reports that at that meeting Cheney reviewed oil maps of Iraq with oil executives. www.gregpalast.com
- [17] See Takis Fotopoulos, "[Transitional Strategies and the Inclusive Democracy Project](#)", *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (March 2002).
- [18] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas*, trans. W.R. Boyce Gibson, (New York: First Collier Books, 1975), p. 98.
- [19] See Y.Oikonomou's insightful article in this issue.
- [20] <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=plat.514a>
- [21] Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Francis Cornford, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 227.
- [22] Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, p. 232.
- [23] Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, p. 230.
- [24] Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, p. 229n. The first effect of Socratic questioning is perplexity experienced by the student.
- [25] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason Vol.1*, (London: NLB, 1976), pp. 233-234.

[26] See Takis Fotopoulos on the emergence of representative 'democracy', *The Multidimensional Crisis and Inclusive Democracy* (English translation of the book with the same title published in Greek, Gordios, 2005), [ch. 1](#).

[27] John Dewey, *Individualism Old and New*, (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962), chapt. III.

[28] John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems*, Chapt. IV.