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Democracy's Nemesis

The Rise of the Corporate University

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This essay focuses on how higher education has been reshaped under the influence of a market rationality, however devalued recently, that continues to license out the university as a storefront, reconfigure governance on the model of a discredited business model, reduce faculty to contract labor, and position students largely as customers. Against the increasing corporatization of higher education, the essay calls for reclaiming education as crucial to the project of democratization, educating students to be willing and able to engage the relationship between equality and social justice as fundamental to public life, and provide the conditions for educators to connect their teaching to broader social issues.

Keywords: education; market fundamentalism; pedagogy; democracy; public intellectuals

The business mind, having its own conversation and language, its own interests, its own intimate groupings in which men of this mind, in their collective capacity, determine the tone of society at large as well as the government of industrial society We now have, although without formal or legal status, a mental and moral corporateness for which history affords no parallel.

John Dewey, 1930, p. 41

Writing in the aftermath of the rise of fascism that had engulfed Europe, two renown philosophers, John Dewey and Hannah Arendt, shared the assumption that one of the most serious threats facing democracy in the 20th century was the “eclipse of the public” (see Arendt, 1968; Dewey, 1927). Arendt and Dewey believed that there was a strong correlation between the death of substantive democracy and the demise of those public *realms* where individuals practiced the art of critical thinking, participated in spirited debate, exercised an engaged thoughtfulness, and learned the necessity of holding authority accountable. Both insisted that without such public spheres, politics loses its democratic character

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and human beings grow irresolute and irresponsible, failing to act as thoughtful agents and engaged citizens “in concert.” Such concerns seem especially relevant today, particularly as North American higher education struggles to redefine its role in a period of enormous economic, political, and technological flux.

At a time in which social forms and social bonds increasingly lose their shape or disappear altogether (see Bauman, 2007), higher education seems to retain a reassuring permanency, as a slowly changing bulwark in a rapidly dissolving landscape of traditional institutions. Edward Said (2004) captured this quality of higher education insisting that “the American university remains the one public space available to real alternative intellectual practices: no other institution like it on such a scale exists anywhere else in the world” (p. 72). If Said is right, higher education may be one of the few institutions left that still fosters critical inquiry, public freedom, and common deliberation, simultaneously keeping alive the promise of a democratic ethos and politics. Of course, educating young people in the public spirit of democracy by providing them with the knowledge, passion, civic capacities, and social responsibility necessary to address the problems facing the nation and globe has always been challenged by the existence of rigid disciplinary boundaries, the cult of expertise or highly specialized scholarship unrelated to public life, and antidemocratic ideologies that scoff at the exercise of academic freedom. Such forces have hardly gone away; they have been intensified and supplemented by the contemporary emergence of a market-based neoliberal logic that exhibits disdain for both democracy and publically engaged teaching and scholarship. This means that while the American university still employs the rhetoric of a democratic public sphere, there is a growing gap between a stated belief in noble purposes and the reality of an academy that is under siege.

Just as democracy appears to be fading in the United States so is the legacy of higher education’s faith in and commitment to democracy. Higher education is increasingly abandoning its role as a democratic public sphere as it aligns itself with corporate power and market values. Instead of being a space of critical dialogue, analysis, and interpretation, it is increasingly defined as a space of consumption where ideas are validated in instrumental terms and valued for their success in attracting corporate and government funding (see Cooper et al., 2002; Giroux & Giroux, 2004). As the culture of research is oriented towards the needs of corporate culture, faculty and students find their work further removed from the language of democratic values and their respective roles modeled largely upon entrepreneurs and consumers. With no irony intended, Philip Leopold (2007) argued that it was an “essential part of an academic career” that academics be viewed as business entrepreneurs, trained to “watch the bottom line” and to be attentive to “principles of finance, management, and marketing” and the development of a “brand identity (academic reputation) that is built on marketing (publications and presentations) of a high-quality product (new knowledge)” (para 23). Unfortunately, Professor Leopold’s instrumental understanding of faculty as a “brand name” and the university as a new marketplace of commerce is not a line drawn from a gag offered up by Jon Stewart on the Comedy Channel. Instead, it

has become one of the dominant views of the purpose and meaning of higher education. Hence it no longer seems unreasonable to argue that just as democracy is being emptied out, the university is also being stripped of its role as a democratic setting where, though, in often historically fraught ways, a democratic ethos can be cultivated, practiced, and sustained for each generation. Higher education in the United States appears to be suffering from a crisis of both politics and a crisis of legitimacy. Politically, higher education is increasingly being influenced by larger economic, military, and ideological forces that consistently attempt to narrow its purview as a democratic public *realm* (see Giroux, 2007). Public intellectuals are now replaced by privatized intellectuals often working in secrecy and engaged in research that serves either the warfare state or the corporate state. Intellectuals are no longer placed in a vibrant relationship to public life but now labor under the influence of managerial modes of governance and market values that mimic the logic of Wall Street. Consequently, higher education appears to be increasingly decoupling itself from its historic legacy as a crucial public sphere, responsible for both educating students for the workplace and providing them with the modes of critical discourse, interpretation, judgment, imagination, and experiences that deepen and expand a democracy. Unable to legitimate its purpose and meaning according to such important democratic practices and principles, higher education now narrates itself in terms that are more instrumental, commercial, and practical. As universities adopt the ideology of the transnational corporation and become subordinated to the needs of capital they are less concerned about how they might educate students in the ideology and civic practices of democratic governance and the necessity of using knowledge to address the challenges of public life (see Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Readings, 1996). In a corporate university that focuses instead on market values, identities, and social relations, John Dewey's once vaunted claim that "democracy needs to be reborn in each generation, and education is its midwife" is either willfully ignored, forgotten, or becomes an object of scorn (Dewey cited in Hollander, 2000, para. 6).

Educators such as Hannah Arendt, John Dewey, and Maxine Greene have long believed and rightly argued that we should not allow education to be modeled after the business world, nor should we allow corporate power and influence to undermine the semiautonomy of higher education by exercising control and power over its faculty, curricula, and students. All of these public intellectuals shared a common vision and project of rethinking what role education might play providing students with the habits of mind and ways of acting that would enable them to "identify and probe the most serious threats and dangers that democracy faces in a global world dominated by instrumental and technological thinking" (Bernstein, 2005, p. 45). All three theorists offered a notion of the university as a bastion of democratic learning and values that provides a crucial referent in exploring the more specific question regarding what form will be taken by the relationship between corporations and higher education in the 21st century. In the best of all worlds, corporations would view higher education as much more than merely a training center for future business employees, a franchise for

generating profits, or a space in which corporate culture and education merge in order to produce literate consumers.

Higher education has a deeper responsibility not only to search for the truth regardless of where it may lead but also to educate students to make authority politically and morally accountable and to expand both academic freedom and the possibility and promise of the university as a bastion of democratic inquiry, values, and politics, even as these are necessarily refashioned at the beginning of the new millennium. While questions regarding whether the university should serve the public rather than private interests no longer carry the weight of forceful criticism as they did when raised by Thorstein Veblen (1918), Robert Lynd (1939), and C. Wright Mills (1956) in the first part of the 20th century, such questions are still crucial in addressing the reality of higher education and what it might mean to imagine the university's full participation in public life as the protector and promoter of democratic values. In what follows, I will explore this issue by providing some signposts and strategies for challenging the current assault on higher education by corporate power and for reclaiming universities as a key step toward an engaged, thoughtful, global citizenry.

Under the governance of the Bush administration, right-wing forces have attempted to exert more control over higher education, and there is little in their vision of the university that imagines young people as anything other than a market for corporate exploitation or an appendage of the Department of Homeland Security. In a country marked by the gutting of social protections and the shredding of the constitutional rights of American citizens, the Bush administration's veto over legislation designed to provide health benefits for uninsured children, its systemic disinvestment in elementary and secondary education as a public good, its sanctioning of a right-wing attack on freedom of the press, its decision to wage a war based on government lies, and its ongoing promotion of an imperial presidency and the greed once celebrated in the Gilded Age, the university seems to offer no escape and little resistance—even as its own freedom and modes of democratic governance are undermined. Instead, the humanistic knowledge and values of the university are being excised as higher education becomes increasingly corporatized and militarize-policies that have been embraced by the Obama administration. The corporate university, according to Richard Ohmann (2002),

acts like a profit-making business rather than a public or philanthropic trust. Thus, we hear of universities applying productivity and performance measures to teaching (Illinois); of plans to put departments in competition with one another for resources (Florida); of cutting faculty costs not only by replacing full-timers with part-timers and temps and by subcontracting for everything from food services to the total management of physical plants, but also by substituting various schemes of computerized instruction; and so on.

Such corporatization affects not only the culture of the campus but also the very content delivered by the university, as academic labor is increasingly based on corporate needs rather than on the demands of research for the public good or

on education designed to improve public life (see Aronowitz, 2000; Aronowitz & DiFazio 1994; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Bok, 2003; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Giroux & Giroux, 2004; Gould, 2003; Kirp, 2005; Livingstone, 1998; Nelson, 1997; Readings, 1996; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Tudiver, 1999; Washburn, 2005; White & Hauck, 2000). In the corporate university, academics are now expected to be “academic entrepreneurs,” valuable only for the grant money and prestige they attract, and not for the valuable teaching, research, and public service they can provide. Sacrificed in this transformation is any notion of higher education as a crucial public sphere in which critical citizens and democratic agents are formed and become capable of addressing the anti-democratic forces that are spreading throughout the United States and abroad.

The appeal to excellence by university CEOs now functions like a corporate logo, hyping efficiency while denuding critical thought and scholarship of any intellectual, civic, and political substance. The language of market fundamentalism and the emerging corporate university radically alter the vocabulary available for appraising the meaning of citizenship, agency, and civic virtue. Within this discourse everything is for sale, and what is not is relegated to relative invisibility. The traditional academic imperative to “publish or perish” is now supplemented with the neoliberal mantra “privatize or perish” as everyone in the university is transformed into an entrepreneur, customer, or client, and every relationship is ultimately judged in bottom-line, cost-effective terms. As the university is annexed by defense, corporate, and national security interests, critical scholarship is replaced by research for either weapons technology (e.g., Ray Guns) or commercial profits, just as the private intellectual and warfare intellectual now replace the public intellectual, and the public relations intellectual supplants the engaged intellectual in the wider culture.

While the university should equip people to enter the workplace, it should also educate them to contest workplace inequalities, imagine democratically organized forms of work, and identify and challenge those injustices that contradict and undercut the most fundamental principles of freedom, equality, and respect for all people who constitute the global public sphere. Higher education is about more than job preparation and consciousness raising; it is also about imagining different futures and politics as a form of intervention into public life. In contrast to the cynicism and political withdrawal fostered by an aggressively corporatized media culture, education demands that citizens be able to negotiate the interface of private considerations and public issues, be able to recognize those undemocratic forces that deny social, economic, and political justice, and be willing to give some thought to the nature and meaning of their experiences in struggling for a better world.

The University as Licensed Storefront

Anyone who spends any time on a college campus in the United States these days cannot miss how higher education is changing. Strapped for money and

increasingly defined through the language of corporate culture, many universities seem less interested in higher learning than in becoming licensed storefronts for brand-name corporations—selling off space, buildings, and endowed chairs to rich corporate donors. University bookstores are now managed by big corporate conglomerates such as Barnes & Noble, while companies such as Sodexho-Marriott (also a large investor in the U.S. private prison industry) run a large percentage of college dining halls, and McDonald's and Starbucks occupy prominent locations on the student commons. Student IDs are now adorned with MasterCard and Visa logos, providing students who may have few assets with an instant line of credit and an identity as full-time consumers—burdened with even more unmanageable debt.

In addition, housing, alumni relations, health care, and a vast array of other services are now being leased out to private interests to manage and run. One consequence is that spaces on university campuses once marked as public and noncommodified—places for quiet study or student gatherings—now have the appearance of a shopping mall. Commercial logos, billboards, and advertisements plaster the walls of student centers, dining halls, cafeterias, and bookstores. Administrators at York University in Toronto solicited a number of corporations to place their logos on university-sponsored online courses “for ten thousand dollars per course” (Yates, 2000). Everywhere students turn outside of the university classroom, they are confronted with vendors and commercial sponsors who are hawkking credit cards, athletic goods, soft drinks, and other commodities that one associates with the local shopping mall. Universities and colleges compound this marriage of commercial and educational values by signing exclusive contracts with Pepsi, Nike, and other contractors, further blurring the distinction between student and consumer. The message to students is clear: Customer satisfaction is offered as a surrogate for learning; “to be a citizen is to be a consumer, and nothing more. Freedom means freedom to purchase” (Croissant, 2001, para. 11).

Why should we care? Colleges and universities do not simply produce knowledge and new perspectives for students; they also play an influential role in shaping their identities, values, and sense of what it means to become citizens of the world. If colleges and universities are to define themselves as centers of teaching and learning vital to the democratic life of the nation and globe, they must acknowledge the real danger of becoming mere adjuncts to big business, or corporate entities in themselves. As Robert Zemsky (2003) warned, “When the market interests totally dominate colleges and universities, their role as public agencies significantly diminishes—as does their capacity to provide venues for the testing of new ideas and the agendas for public action” (p. B7).

With such entrepreneurial types now filling the ranks of university presidents, it is not surprising that venture capitalists scour colleges and universities in search of big profits to be made through licensing agreements, the control of intellectual property rights, and investing in university spinoff companies. Deans are likewise often hired from the ranks of the business community and, increasingly, the intelligence agencies, and are evaluated on the basis of their ability to attract external

funding and impose business models of leadership and accountability. As Stanley Aronowitz (1998) pointed out, "Today . . . leaders of higher education wear the badge of corporate servants proudly" (p. 32). And why not, when the notion of market-driven education has the full support of the Bush-type Republicans and their corporate allies? Scholarship is increasingly measured not by the search for truth, rigor, or its social contributions. On the contrary, it is all too willingly defined in support of market needs just as funding for university programs is related to the commodification of ideas and the accumulation of profits. What is missing from the space of the corporate university is any perspective suggesting that, at the very least, university administrators, academics, students, and others exercise the political, civic, and ethical courage needed to refuse the commercial rewards that would reduce them to becoming simply another brand name, corporate logo, or adjunct to corporate interests.

Corporatizing Higher Education

The former Bush administration willingly supported the corporatization of higher education through both overt statements and by reinforcing the conditions that make such corporatization possible. Reductions in grants for students, pressure on students to use their education as job-training, and the replacement of government grants with corporate-sponsored loans have facilitated the process. As the Bush administration cut student aid, plundered public services, and pushed states to the brink of financial disaster, higher education increasingly became a privilege rather than a right. Many middle- and working-class students have either found it financially impossible to enter college or, because of increased costs, have to drop out. As the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported, young people from poor and disadvantaged families faced even more difficult hurdles in trying to attain a college education because the Bush administration decided to cut Pell Grants, the nation's largest federal student aid program. In addition, because Congress changed the federal needs-analysis formula, more than 90,000 disadvantaged students were disqualified in 2005 from receiving not only Pell Grants but also state financial aid (Burd, 2005).

As all levels of government reduce their funding to higher education, not only will tuition increase but student loans will gradually replace grants and scholarships. Lacking adequate financial aid, students, especially poor students, will have to finance the high costs of their education through private corporations such as Citibank, Chase Manhattan, Marine Midland, and other lenders. According to *The Project on Student Debt* (2006), nearly two thirds of both undergraduate and graduate students at 4-year colleges and public universities have student loans. While it makes sense to focus on such issues as the impact of corporate interests on research, the shift in governance from faculty to business-oriented administrators, and the massive increase in adjuncts and casual labor, little has been said about the corporate structuring of student debt and its impact on a sizeable number of people attending higher education. Rather than work their

way through college, students now borrow their way to graduation and, in doing so, have been collectively labeled a “generation of debt” (Kamenetz, 2006). As Jeff Williams (2006) pointed out, the average student now graduates with debts that are staggering.

The average undergraduate student loan debt in 2002 was US\$18,900. It more than doubled from 1992, when it was US\$9,200. Added to this is charge card debt, which averaged US\$3,000 in 2002, boosting the average total debt to about US\$22,000. One can reasonably expect, given still accelerating costs, that it is over US\$30,000 now. Bear in mind that this does not include other private loans or the debt that parents take on to send their children to college. (Neither does it account for “post-baccalaureate loans,” which more than doubled in 7 years from US\$18,572 in 1992-1993 to US\$38,000 in 1999-2000 and have likely doubled again). (p. 53)

Saddled with enormous debts, many students find that their career choices are severely limited to jobs in the corporate workforce that offer them entry-level salaries that make it possible to pay off their loans. Indentured for decades in order to pay off such loans, these students find it difficult to consider public service jobs or jobs that offer rewards other than high salaries. One recent survey reported that “two-thirds of law graduates say that debt is a primary factor in keeping them from considering a career in public interest law. . . . Other surveys have found that about half of the students who begin law school with stated public interest law commitments go into private practice law upon graduation in large part because of their debt burden” (Tannock, 2006, p. 49).

For many young people caught in the margins of poverty, low-paying jobs, recession, and “jobless recovery,” the potential costs of higher education, regardless of its status or availability, will dissuade them from even thinking about attending college. Unfortunately, as state and federal agencies and university systems direct more and more of their resources (such as state tax credits and scholarship programs) toward middle- and upper-income students and away from need-based aid, the growing gap in college enrollments between high-income students (95% enrollment rate) and low-income students (75% enrollment rate) with comparable academic abilities will widen even further (*New York Times*, March 27, 2002, p. A27). In fact, a report by a federal advisory committee claimed that nearly 48% of qualified students from low-income families would not be attending college in the fall of 2002 because of rising tuition charges and a shortfall in federal and state grants. The report specifically noted that “[n]early 170,000 of the top high-school graduates from low- and moderate-income families are not enrolling in college this year because they cannot afford to do so” (Burd, 2002, p. 1). A 2006 government report titled “Mortgaging Our Future: How Financial Barriers to College Undercut America’s Global Competitiveness” stated that “1.4 million to 2.4 million bachelor’s degrees will be lost this decade as financial concerns prevent academically qualified students from the lowest income bracket from attending college.” And the report suggested that these figures are conservative (cited in Porter, 2006, p. A25).

When universities can no longer balance their budget through tuition increases or federal grants, they turn to corporate money and self-branding to balance their finances. Students become “customers,” both of the university’s own brand and of corporations that sell to them directly through university deals—a trend that is intensifying under the current economic recession. As Michael Yates (2000) pointed out,

Management tells us that our students are consumers of a product, no different in principle than the fact that they are consumers of CD players and sneakers. We must be concerned only with the quality of our product, but the clear implication is that education must be on par with CD players if education’s quality is to be measured in the same way as that of the CD player. Measurable competencies are taking the place of all-around education, something which (by its very nature) cannot be measured or quality-controlled. And as students pick up on this notion of themselves as consumers of a measurable product, they come to treat education as a purchase. (para. 21)

Although higher education has never been free of the market, there is a new intimacy between higher education and corporate culture, characterized by what Larry Hanley (2001) has called a “new, quickened symbiosis” (p. 103). The result is “not a fundamental or abrupt change perhaps, but still an unmistakable radical reduction of [higher education’s] public and critical role” (Miyoshi, 1998, p. 263). What was once the hidden curriculum of many universities—the subordination of higher education to capital—has now become an open and much celebrated policy of both public and private higher education. Increasingly, references to higher education as a valuable commodity or for-profit business have become all too common (Pearlstein, 2003). For example, the former president of American University, Milton Greenberg (2004), argued that it was an utterly romanticized assumption to suggest education is *not* a business, and that such romanticism is reinforced by another myth attributed to the romantic age of higher education, namely, “that the substance of teaching, research and learning—protected by academic freedom and professional standards—is not ordinarily subject to profit-and-loss analysis” (p. 11). For Greenberg, education and training for employment appear to be the same thing and, as such, reinforce the charge that the liberal arts have become useless since they do not translate directly into jobs. Greenberg is utterly indifferent to the increasing commodification of knowledge, the secrecy imposed on academics on corporate payrolls, the dismantling of democratic forms of governance, and the increased use of higher education to produce products that can be sold in the market. Not unlike the market fundamentalists or super patriots who want to either privatize higher education or turn it into a bastion of the national security state, Greenberg is blind to the assumption that such forces might pose a grave threat to academic freedom and the function of the university as a democratic public sphere.

But Greenberg is more than indifferent; he also believes that investments in the public good are a burden on taxpayers, which explains his view that there is no need for faculty to meet students in classrooms when both parties can communicate over

e-mail, thus cutting back on large investments (subsidized partly by tax dollars) in buildings and infrastructures. And, finally, there is the tenure system, which Greenberg suggests has nothing to do with academic freedom and is at odds with the managerial principles that work so well in the world of business—that is, outsourcing, downsizing, privatization, increasing casual labor, rule by the few, and deadening forms of accountability. I have focused on Greenberg because he is all too representative of what Stanley Aronowitz (2006) called a powerful and growing “administrative class whose economic and ideological interests are tied to the corporate order and an increasingly intrusive state in everyday academic affairs, especially abrogating faculty’s control over hiring, tenure, and promotion, curricular matters, and its own production of knowledge” (p. 115).

As the line between for-profit and not-for-profit institutions of higher education blurs, the distinctions between democratic values and market interests, between education and job training, collapse. If right-wing reforms in higher education continue unchallenged, the consequence will be a highly undemocratic, bifurcated civic body. In other words, we will have a society in which a highly trained, largely white elite will be allowed to command the techno-information revolution while a low-skilled majority of poor and minority workers will be relegated to filling the McJobs proliferating in the service sector.

An even closer symbiosis of corporate and university culture takes place among faculty who traditionally have sought outside support for research. As government grant money dries up, such researchers must turn for support to corporate funders. Higher education’s need for new sources of funding neatly dovetails with the inexhaustible need on the part of corporations for new products. Within this symbiotic relationship, knowledge is directly linked to its application in the market, resulting in a collapse of the distinction between knowledge and commodity. At the same time, as universities increasingly begin to pattern themselves after multinational businesses, they are more willing to allow corporations that sponsor research to influence the outcome of or place questionable restrictions on what can be published. Knowledge, especially scientific knowledge, has become privatized and commodified, and collaborative relationships among faculty suffer as some firms insist that the results of corporate-sponsored research be kept secret. In a similar manner, researchers funded by corporations have been prohibited from speaking about their research at conferences, talking on the phone with colleagues, or making their labs available to faculty and students not directly involved in the research. Derek Bok (2003) reported that “[n]early one in five life-science professors admitted that they had delayed publication by more than six months for commercial reasons” (p. 65). Equally disturbing are both the growing number of academics who either hold company stocks or have financial connections to the company sponsoring their research and the refusals on the part of many universities to institute disclosure policies that would reveal such conflicts of interest (Bok, 2003, pp. 200-201). Not only have corporate-sponsored protocols regarding disclosure had “a chilling effect on the tradition of scientific transparency, shared knowledge, and open debate about scientific discoveries,” but, in

other cases, "as corporate partners demand that researchers keep ahead of the competition, the erosion of the ethic of honesty has led to frequent instances of fraud in reporting evidence" (Bok, 2003, p. 107). As the boundaries between public and commercial values become blurred, many academics appear less as disinterested truth seekers than as apologists for corporate profiteering.

The disintegration of academic integrity and openness is particularly startling with respect to corporate-funded medical research. The *New England Journal of Medicine* reported in 2002 that "medical schools that conduct research sponsored by drug companies routinely disregard guidelines intended to ensure that the studies are unbiased and that the results are shared with the public" (cited in Mangan, 2002, p. A24). And the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported in 2003 that "one fourth of biomedical scientists have financial affiliations with industry . . . and that research financed by industry is more likely to draw commercially favourable conclusions" (cited in Guterman, 2003). Corporate power and influence also shape the outcome of the research and design of clinical trials. Hence, it is not surprising to find, as the latter journal stated, that "studies reported by the tobacco industry reported pro-industry results [and that] studies on pharmaceuticals were affected by their source of funds as well" (cited in Guterman, 2003). In some instances, corporations place pressure on universities to suppress the publication of those studies whose data question the effectiveness of the wares, threatening not only academic integrity but also public health and safety. Consequently, some universities such as Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, and Stanford have instituted new regulatory controls, attempting to eliminate the more blatant conflicts of interest and corrupting industry influences that characterize the increasingly cozy relationship between higher education and corporations. For example, Stanford University Medical Center "prohibits physicians from accepting any gifts from industry representatives while the physicians are working on the medical-center campus or at off-campus clinical sites. It also bans industry representatives from patient-care areas and the medical school, including research areas, unless they have appointments to train health-care workers to use their companies' equipment" (Mangan, 2006, p. A24). Nevertheless, problems persist. For example, some tenure cases are influenced by the work of a candidate that is critical of corporate interests that benefit the university in which they are working. For example, there is the troubling case of Professor Ignacio H. Chapela, an assistant professor of ecology at the University of California at Berkeley and an outspoken critic of what he calls the university's "dangerous liaisons with the biotechnology industry" (see Chapela, 2003). In denying him tenure, the university overruled a favorable vote of 31-1 by both his department as well as by an outside ad hoc committee of specialists, appointed by a committee of the academic senate. One member of the ad hoc committee, Professor Wayne Getz, expressed shock at the refusal of the university to give Chapela tenure. Getz stated, "I've been here 24 years, and my understanding is that if the department and the ad hoc committee recommend for tenure, you get tenure" (cited in Walsh, 2004, p. A10). Many people believe that Professor Chapela did not get

tenure because he had been a resolute critic of a 1998 multimillion dollar research grant deal between UC Berkeley and Novartis, a Swiss biotechnology company. Professor Chapela later sued the university in court, but withdrew the suit when the university unexpectedly reversed its decision in 2005 and awarded him tenure. Berkeley officials refused to admit any wrongdoing regarding the Chapela case (see Jaschik, 2005).

As university leaders increasingly appeal to the corporate world for funding, engage in money-making ventures as a measure of excellence, and ignore that the line between for-profit and not-for-profit institutions of higher education is collapsing, many schools, as educator John Palattela (2001) observed, will simply “serve as personnel offices for corporations” and quickly dispense with the “historically burdened though important promise of creating democratic mandates for higher education” (p. 73). Of all groups, university and college educators should be the most vocal and militant in challenging the corporatization of education by making clear that at the heart of any form of inclusive democracy is the assumption that learning should be used to expand the public good, create a culture of questioning, and promote democratic social change. Individual and social agency becomes meaningful as part of the willingness to imagine otherwise, “in order to help us find our way to a more human future” (Chomsky, 2000, p. 34). Under such circumstances, knowledge can be used for amplifying human freedom and promoting social justice, and not simply for creating profits.

Outsourcing Academic Labor

As corporate culture and values shape university life, academic labor is increasingly being transformed into the image of a multinational conglomerate workforce. While corporate values such as efficiency and downsizing in higher education appear to have caught the public’s imagination at the moment, this belies the fact that such “reorganization” has been going on for some time. What is new is that the ever growing and “steady corporatization of American higher education has threatened to relegate faculty governance to the historical archive” (Aronowitz, 2006, para. 1). The modern university was once governed, however weakly, by faculty, with the faculty senate naming the university president. That era of faculty control is long gone, with presidents now being named by boards of trustees and governing through handpicked (and well-paid) bureaucrats rather than through faculty committees. John Silber, the former president of Boston University from 1971 to 1996, best exemplifies this trend. As a number of notable academics and public figures have pointed out, Silber often used his administrative power to weaken faculty governance, “punish his critics—sometimes by denial of tenure (against faculty recommendation), sometimes by refusing merit raises and leaves, sometimes by personal abuse (including a false charge of arson, later withdrawn, against a member of the faculty),” engage in “repeated violations of civil liberties,” and promote educational theories that by any

progressive standard would have to be judged as reactionary (cited in Piven et al., 1980; see also, *Boston University Faculty Bulletin*, 1996; Gross, 1995; Jacoby, 2000; Zinn, 1995). Faculty power once rested in the fact that most faculty were full-time and a large percentage of them had tenure, so they could confront administrators without fear of losing their jobs. One of the first steps taken by the newly corporatized university in the 1980s was to limit faculty power by hiring fewer full-time faculty, promoting fewer faculty to tenure, and instituting “post-tenure” reviews that threaten to take tenure away.

When full-time academic labor is outsourced to temporary or contract labor, the intellectual culture of the university declines as overworked graduate students and part-time faculty assume the role of undergraduate teaching with little or no portion of their time and pay allotted for research. Moreover, these contingent faculty are granted no role in the university governance process, are detached from the intellectual life of the university, rarely have time to engage in sustained scholarship, and appear largely as interchangeable instructors acting more like temporary visitors. In short, the hiring of part-time faculty to minimize costs maximizes managerial control not just over faculty but over the educational process itself. Power now resides in the hands of a new cadre of corporate-oriented trustees and administrators who proudly define themselves as entrepreneurs rather than as educational leaders. As democratic decision making in the university dwindles, questions regarding the social responsibility of higher education disappear from public view and both “the democratization of the university and the democratization of society” are undermined (Angus, 2007, p. 73).

One possibility of what the future holds for the corporatizing of higher education can be seen in the example of Rio Salado College in Tempe, Arizona. As reported by Elyse Ashburn (2006), the college is the second largest in the Maricopa County Community College District and has a total of 13,314 students (p. A12). And yet it has “only 33 permanent faculty members, 27 of whom are full-time” (p. A10). Its classes are almost entirely virtual, and it hires close to a 1,000 part-time instructors scattered across the state. The part-time faculty carry the bulk of the teaching and are paid about US\$2,200 a course. Teaching eight courses, four each semester, calculates to slightly less than US\$18,000 a year, which amounts to poverty-level wages. The few, privileged full-time faculty earn between US\$40,000 and US\$88,000 a year (p. A11). The academic labor force at Rio Salado College in this instance has been, for the most part, entirely casualized with almost no possibility that any of its 1,000 members will land a full-time position. Linda Thor, the president of the Rio Salado College, who proudly defines herself as a model of corporate leadership, often quotes from best-selling business books, and “embraces the idea of students as customers” (p. A12). Moreover, consistent with Thor’s embrace of corporate principles and an efficiency-minded management style, the day-to-day duties of instructors at the college are “simplified by RioLearn, a course-management system designed specifically for the college through a partnership with Dell Inc. and the Microsoft Corporation” (p. A12). Most important, this utterly privatized, fragmented, exploitative, and

commercialized vision of higher education should not be dismissed as a quirky approach to university administration. In this view, power, time, and decision making are completely controlled by administrators who view faculty subordination to corporate control “a thing of nature, and, more to the point, the royal road to academic and financial reward” (Aronowitz, 2006, p. 117). The latter is obvious in terms of the ways in which nonprofit institutions are emulating this model. For instance, the University of Illinois, which has three land-grant nonprofit campuses, plans to launch a whole new college, which would be completely online, operate as a for-profit entity, and consist almost entirely of part-time faculty, with no tenured faculty at all. Issues central to university culture such as tenure, academic freedom, and intellectual integrity are dispensed with as faculty governance is now put largely into the hands of administrators and faculty are reduced to outsourced, casual labor, all in the name of fiscal realpolitik. Allegedly, the rationale for this utterly corporatized approach to education is to make the University of Illinois more competitive, while providing “access to high-quality education first and foremost to the people of Illinois” (Jaschik, 2006, August 31, para. 11). In my view, this educational model with its stripped-down version of teaching, its cost-efficiency model of management, and its view of students as customers and of faculty as a source of cheap labor is exactly what informs the current corporate understanding of the future of higher education. Representing the face of higher education in the age of global capital and market fundamentalism, it is less about education than about training, less about educating students to be informed and responsible citizens of the world than about short-term returns on revenue, all the time providing a pseudoacademic warrant to reduce education to an extension of the corporate world. Clearly, this is a view that needs to be resisted if higher education is to retain any democratic value and sense of social responsibility.

The American Council of Education reported in 2002 that “[t]he number of part-time faculty members increased by 79% from 1981 to 1999, to more than 400,000 out of a total of one million instructors overall,” and that the “biggest growth spurt occurred between 1987 and 1993, when 82% of the 120,000 new faculty members hired during that period were for part-time positions” (cited in Walsh, 2002, para. 2). In fact, more professors are working part-time and at 2-year community colleges now than at any other time in the country’s recent history. The American Association of University Professors reported in 2004 that “44.5 percent of all faculty are part-time, and non-tenure-track positions of all types account for more than 60 percent of all faculty appointments in American higher education.” Creating a permanent underclass of part-time professional workers in higher education is not only demoralizing and exploitative for the many faculty who have such jobs but also deskills both part- and full-time faculty by increasing the amount of work they have to do. With less time to prepare, larger class loads, almost no time for research, and excessive grading demands, many adjuncts run the risk of becoming demoralized and ineffective. Any analysis concerning the deskilling and disempowering of faculty points to a politics of temporality and how time is controlled and for whom at all levels of higher

education. Time is crucial to how a university structures its public mission, shapes governance with faculty, controls the use of space, and limits or expands student access, as well as how it is organized in the legitimation and organization of particular forms of knowledge, research, and pedagogy. For the past 20 years, time as a value and the value of time have been redefined through the dictates of neoliberal economics, which have largely undermined any notion of public time guided by the noncommodified values central to a political and social democracy. In higher education, corporate time maps faculty relationships through self-promoting market agendas and narrow definitions of self-interest. Caught on the treadmill of getting more grants, teaching larger classes, and producing revenue for the university, faculty become another casualty of a business ideology that attempts to “extract labor from campus workers at the lowest possible cost, one willing to sacrifice research independence and integrity for profit” (Nelson, 2002, p. 717). Time in this context is less about providing opportunities for faculty dialogue, shared responsibilities, class preparation, and rigorous scholarship than it is about a notion of *corporate time*, which is sped up, accelerated, and compressed. Time in its corporate versions becomes a deprivation rather than a resource, a temporality designed to excise any notion of self-development, an expansive sense of agency, and critical thought itself. Grounded in the culture of hierarchical power relations, post-Fordist managerial principles, competitiveness, and bottom-line interests, corporate time reworks faculty loyalties, transforming educators into dispensable labor with little or no power over the basic decisions that structure academic work (Watkins, 1993). Faculty interaction is structured less around collective solidarities built upon practices that offer a productive relationship to public life than around corporate-imposed rituals of competition and production that conform to the “narrowly focused idea of the university as a support to the economy” (Sharp, 2002, p. 280). But more is reproduced than structural dislocations among faculty: There is also an alarming preponderance of crippling fear, insecurity, and resentment that makes it difficult for faculty to take risks, forge bonds of solidarity, engage in social criticism, and perform as public intellectuals rather than as technicians in the service of corporate largesse. These structural and ideological factors threaten to undermine the collective power that faculty need to challenge the increasingly corporate-based, top-down administrative structures that are becoming commonplace in many colleges and universities. Powerlessness breeds resentment and anger among part-time faculty, and fear and despair among full-time faculty, who feel their tenure is no longer secure. The ease with which tenured faculty can now be replaced has been demonstrated in recent years by major universities such as Penn State, which fired feminist, drama professor Nona Gerard for writing “derogatory” e-mail messages in which she complained about the lack of resources for her program, criticized the performance of some of her colleagues, and staged a play that a right-wing donor found offensive because of its partial nudity and sexually explicit language (see Ward, 2004).

Such academic downsizing has been legitimized through a particularly debased notion of professionalism that bears little resemblance to its once-stated emphasis on quality teaching, creative research, and public service. The new corporate professionalism now positions and rewards educators as narrow specialists, unencumbered by matters of ethics, power, and ideology. No longer concerned with important social issues, democratic values, or the crucial task of educating students about important historical, cultural, social, and theoretical traditions, corporate-inspired notions of professionalism now shift the emphasis from the quality of academic work to a crude emphasis on quantity, from creativity and critical dialogue in the classroom to standardization and rote learning, from supporting full-time tenured positions to constructing an increasing army of contract workers, and from rigorous scholarship and engagement with public issues to the push for grant writing and external funding.

A number of theorists have argued that the turn toward downsizing and deskilling of faculty are exacerbated by the attempts on the part of many universities to expand into the profitable market of "distance education," whose online courses reach thousands of students. David Noble has written extensively on the restructuring of higher education under the imperatives of the new digital technologies and the move into distance education. If he is correct, the news is not good. Distance education fuels the rise in the use of part-time faculty, who will be "perfectly suited to the investor-imagined university of the future" (Noble, 2001, p. 31; see also, Noble, 2002). According to Noble, online learning largely functions through pedagogical models and methods of delivery that not only rely on standardized, prepackaged curricula and methodological efficiency but also reinforce the commercial penchant toward training students and further deskilling the professoriate. The former president of Teachers College at Columbia University, Arthur Levine, has predicted that the new information technology may soon make the traditional college and university obsolete, and he is not alone in this view (cited in Press & Washburn, 2001, p. 2). More than half of the nation's colleges and universities deliver courses online or over the Internet (Press & Washburn, 2001, p. 2). Mass-marketed degrees and courses are not only being offered by prestigious universities such as Seton Hall, Stanford, Harvard, the New School, and the University of Chicago they are also giving rise to cyber-backed colleges such as the Western Governors University and for-profit, stand-alone, publicly traded institutions such as the University of Phoenix. The marriage of corporate culture, higher education, and the new high-speed technologies also offers universities big opportunities to cut back on maintenance expenses, eliminate entire buildings such as libraries and classroom facilities, and trim labor costs (Washburn, 2005).

This is not to say that technologies such as e-mail, online discussion groups, and the Internet cannot improve classroom instruction by ameliorating existing modes of communication, or by simply making academic work more interesting. Dismissing these technologies and the new cutting-edge technologies offhand makes as little sense as embracing the printed book as the only real source of

learning. The real issue is whether these varied technologies in their diverse pedagogical uses in higher education and the society at large are governed by a technocratic rationality that undermines human freedom and democratic values. As Herbert Marcuse (1998) has argued, when the rationality that drives technology is instrumentalized and “transformed into standardized efficiency . . . liberty is confined to the selection of the most adequate means for reaching a goal which [the individual] did not set” (p. 45). One consequence of the use of a means driven technology as a pedagogical tool is that instrumental goals replace ethical and political considerations, diminishing classroom control by teachers while offering a dehumanizing pedagogy for students. A different view of technology and pedagogy, especially for the humanities has been advanced by critical theorists such as Cathy Davidson and David Theo Goldberg (2005). They argue for what they call “digital humanism,” by which they mean “not only the digitizing of archives but a range of cutting-edge technologies created to advance innovative research and teaching projects in the humanities, arts, and social sciences” (p. B7). Rather than using distance teaching and learning to eliminate faculty and standardize subject matter, Davidson and Goldberg are rightly suggesting that the use of real-time video, 3-D digital imaging, blogs, gaming environments, and other digital technologies can produce new productive forms of research and collaboration across disciplinary boundaries and geographic spaces in ways that not only enhance teaching, learning, and research, but also connect the humanities and higher education in general to a global world increasingly shaped by the new technologies. They also connect the new cutting-edge technologies to higher education specifically within a democratic project that affirms the importance of the research university, the increasing relevance of interdisciplinarity in a global world, and the promise of new pedagogical practices that do not reduce academics to technicians and students to passive consumers (see Davidson & Goldberg, 2004). Of course, there is more at stake here than updating the humanities to cope with the new information age and its ever proliferating technologies. There is the more crucial question of recognizing that if the humanities specifically and higher education in general are to renew their public commitments to global democracy they must offer students the knowledge and technological tools to develop multiple forms of literacy and be skilled not just as critical readers of texts but also as cultural producers able to use the new technologies to provide alternatives to the deadening silences and misrepresentations produced through official channels of communication both within and outside of higher education. Such technologies become meaningful not only as part of new pedagogical sites and practices but also as crucial to a new understanding of the mutually determining relationship between critical agency and the vitality of a democratic conception of politics.

But in the current corporate-driven university environment, academics find themselves pressured increasingly to teach more service-oriented and market-based courses. The processes of vocationalization—fueled by corporate values that mimic “flexibility,” “competition,” or “lean production,” and rationalized through

the application of accounting principles—threaten to gut many academic departments and programs that cannot translate their subject matter into commercial gains. As Michael Peters (2002) observed, entire disciplines and bodies of knowledge are now either valued or devalued on the basis of their “ability to attract global capital and . . . potential for serving transnational corporations. Knowledge is valued for its strict utility rather than as an end in itself or for its emancipatory effects” (p. 148). Good value for students means taking courses labeled as “relevant” in market terms, which are often counterposed to courses in the social sciences, humanities, and the fine arts that are concerned with forms of learning that do not readily translate into either private gain or commercial value. Hence many universities are expanding their course offerings in the liberal arts so that students can take career-oriented classes in the professional schools “to prepare students for the job market” (Arenson, 2004, p. A1).

Courting the Corporations

At the same time, while compassion and concern for students and teachers wane, universities are eagerly courting big business: “In recent years academic institutions and a growing number of Internet companies have been racing to tap into the booming market in virtual learning” (Press & Washburn, 2001, p. 2). As colleges and corporations collaborate over the content of degree programs, particularly with regard to online graduate degree programs, college curricula run the risk of being narrowly tailored to the needs of specific businesses. For example, Babson College developed a master’s degree program in business administration specifically for Intel workers. Similarly, the University of Texas at Austin developed an online Masters of Science degree in science, technology, and commercialization that caters only to students who work at IBM. Moreover, the program will orient its knowledge, skills, and research to focus exclusively on IBM projects (see Carnevale, 2002). Not only do such courses come dangerously close to becoming company training workshops; they also open up higher education to powerful corporate interests that have little regard for the more time-honored educational mandate to cultivate an informed, critical citizenry.

Online courses also raise an important question about intellectual property: Who owns the rights for course materials developed for online use? Because of the market potential of online lectures and course materials, various universities have attempted to lay ownership claims to such knowledge. For example, at the University of California at Los Angeles, an agreement was signed in 1994 that allowed an outside vendor, OnlineLearning.net, to create and copyright online versions of UCLA courses. The agreement was eventually “amended in 1999 to allow professors’ rights to the basic content of their courses . . . [but] under the amended contract, OnlineLearning retain[ed] their right to market and distribute those courses online, which is the crux of the copyright dispute” (Press & Washburn, 2001, p. 8). As universities make more and more claims to owning the

content of faculty notes, lectures, books, computer files, and media for classroom use, the first casualty is, as UCLA Professor Ed Condren pointed out, “the legal protection that enables faculty to freely express their views without fear of censorship or appropriation of their ideas” (cited in Press & Washburn, 2001, p. 8). At the same time, by selling course property rights for a fee, universities infringe on the ownership rights of faculty members by taking from them any control over how their courses might be used in the public domain.

The increasing influence of corporate power on higher education can be seen in the disturbing new practice of many universities to substitute business experience for scholarship in awarding endowed chairs and chaired professorships. In a personal correspondence, Norm Denzin (2007) points out that at his university “there is a move to turn the smaller colleges into professional schools—to bring in persons from the business world as CEOs and then to give them tenure and endowed chairs based on creative criteria—e.g. they ran the best and biggest Ad Agency in NYC.” (N. Denzin personal communication, January 2, 2007)

This is scandalous and marks the increasing appearance on college campuses of nonacademic business administrators and faculty who view the university largely as an adjunct to corporate interests and big business. Corporate donors are also making their presence felt in higher education by sponsoring institutes, think tanks, and foundations to promote corporate values and conservative ideologies. For example, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, free market advocates attempted unsuccessfully to fund the Academy on Capitalism and Limited Government, whose research would focus on “the relationship between economic growth and reduced government size [and how] free market capitalism can become more effective in providing opportunities and prosperity for individual nations” (Jaschik, 2007, para. 6). In some cases, corporate donors do more than sponsor chairs or use their business experience as a way of securing high-profile university appointments; they also play an important role in the hiring process. One particularly egregious example emerged after University of California Irvine Chancellor Michael Drake first hired then abruptly fired noted liberal legal scholar, Erwin Chemerinsky as dean of the university’s new law school. After considerable public outcry and media coverage emerged over the incident, Drake rehired Chemerinsky but was never forthcoming about why he fired him in the first place. What eventually emerged was that the University of California had entered into a deal with Orange County conservative billionaire Donald Bren giving him “the right to be consulted in the selection of a dean for its new law school in return for his US\$20-million donation” (Barboza, Weinstein, & Therolf, 2007, para. 1). Drake denies that he had any conversations with Bren or his staff about the hiring of Chemerinsky, but that appears quite dubious in light of the agreement, which in itself is a blow to faculty governance as well as the increasingly fragile integrity and semiautonomy of the university.

Corporate interests are also exerting their influence over major aspects of university decision making in and out of the classroom in a number of other ways. No longer content to make their presence felt on college campuses through the

funding of endowed chairs, academic centers, or research about business issues that eventually is used as case studies, companies such as BMW and IBM are taking their involvement with higher education to a new level. When the German automaker BMW contributed US\$10 million to Clemson University in 2002 to help develop a US\$1.5 billion automotive and research center, Clemson gave BMW an extraordinary amount of control over curriculum and hiring procedures. Not only did BMW play a role in developing the curriculum for the automotive graduate engineering school, but it also “drew up profiles of its ideal students; [provided] a list of professors and specialists to interview, and even had approval rights over the school’s architectural look” (Browning, 2006, p. C1). In addition, BMW gave Clemson’s president a BMW X5 to drive. In spite of Clemson’s claims that it retains its independence as a public university despite its close ties with BMW, candidates for the endowed chairs were interviewed by BMW executives and “a network council composed of BMW managers meets monthly to advise Clemson on the curriculum” (Browning, 2006, p. C6). Thomas Kurfess, the first person hired to fill a BMW-endowed professorship, has no reservations about the growing corporatization of higher education, stating that “[t]his is a different model. It is nice to be able to show that it’s not just the name beyond the chair . . . [and have] real ties to industry” (cited in Jaschik, 2006, August 25, para. 8). A lawsuit contesting the contract between BMW and Clemson made public a letter written by a BMW official who stated that “BMW is going to drive the entire campus” (cited in Browning, 2006, p. C6). At least BMW is honest about its intentions and the role it wants to play in shaping Clemson’s relationship with the industry.

A more serious example of the growing symbiosis between higher education and the corporate world is apparent in a recent agreement between the oil giant BP (formerly known as British Petroleum) and the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the Lawrence Berkeley National Labs (which is run by the University of California). Under this agreement, BP would provide more than US\$500 million over a 10-year period to fund biofuel research, thereby doubling the amount of corporate funding on the Berkeley campus. As part of the largest industry–academia alliance in history, BP will fund the Energy Biosciences Institute, which includes 25 labs divided among its three public partners. This plan represents the largest “corporate funding package in American university history” and has enormous implications for university–corporate partnerships in the future (Brenneman, 2007). While Robert Birgeneau, Chancellor of UC Berkeley, has lauded the agreement as “our generation’s moonshot,” UC president Robert Dynes was more to the point in proclaiming that “It is my belief that we’re reinventing the research university in these kinds of govern-public-private partnerships” (cited in Bergman, 2007, para. 15). The details of the agreement suggest that Dynes’s statement is quite true, although the kind of research university actually being reinvented is one that increasingly allows corporate priorities for profit to drive its research agenda. What is disturbing about the deal is that BP will place 50 of its own scientists to

work along with academics, mentoring graduate students, teaching classes, and attending seminars, thereby giving BP an unwarranted amount of control and influence over the direction of the institute. As Jennifer Washburn (2007) pointed out, BP will be allowed to provide input in appointing a director and “other high-level positions to be filled by BP employees or appointees,” thus insuring that they play a “major role in setting research agendas and controlling purse strings” (para 8). Moreover, “this plan grants BP exclusive license options over UC Berkeley intellectual property rights” (Associated Students of the University of California, 2007). Many faculty, students, and other members of the academic community at Berkeley were outraged over the fact that they were excluded from any discussion about the proposed partnership during the university’s negotiations with BP. Other critics point out that BP employees do not have to abide by the law of public disclosure and have no obligation to publish their research. The closed-door nature of the research that will be conducted under this agreement, along with the BP’s overriding profit incentive, raises serious questions about the corporate priorities that will surely dominate this partnership as well as about what exactly it will mean for universities to act in the public interest rather than in the interest of BP. Other critics have raised an equally disturbing criticism insisting that the partnership “would let BP green-wash its image and poison the well of UC’s academic integrity” (Marshall, 2007, para. 2). This is a particularly stinging observation in light of BP’s public record. Most recently, BP has agreed to pay US\$373 million in fines and restitution and has admitted to criminal wrongdoing in order “to settle accusations of environmental violations that had led to a fatal explosion at a Texas refinery in 2005 and to leaks of crude oil from pipelines in Alaska” (Werdigier & Labaton, 2007, p. B1). But BP is also tainted by an ugly political history, including involvement in the overthrow of the Iranian government in the 1950s, support for the South African government during the apartheid years, and possibly financing “a private army in Columbia that has killed six people ‘protecting’ a pipeline through indigenous lands” (Zimmerman, Ludwig, & Warman, 1998, para. 8).

Corporate-university partnerships such as the BP project violate the academic integrity of the university and bode poorly for the future of higher education in that they subordinate democratic values to corporate values and undercut the power of faculty and administration to define the meaning and purpose of the university and its relationship to the larger society. Redefined in a corporate environment, the democratic meaning and function of the university is radically weakened, if not jettisoned altogether, along with the academic freedom to safeguard a socially responsible faculty and those pedagogical commitments so crucial to creating critical citizens capable of questioning received truths and constituted powers.

Resisting University, Inc.

While the cult of professionalism inspires fear and insecurity in academics terrified about maintaining tenure, getting it, or for that matter simply securing a

part-time position, university educators also face the harsh lessons of financial deprivation, overburdened workloads, and the loss of power in shaping the governance process. They devote less time to their role either as well-informed public intellectuals or as “cosmopolitan intellectuals situated in the public sphere” (Aronowitz, 1998, p. 444). Many faculty live under the constant threat of being downsized, punished, or fired and are less concerned about quality research and teaching than about accepting the new rules of corporate-based professionalism in order to simply survive in the new corporatized academy. Against the current drive to corporatize higher education, commodify curricula, treat students as customers and trainees, and relegate faculty to the status of contract employees, higher education needs to be defended as a public good. Central to such a task is the challenge to resist the university’s development into what literary theorist Bill Readings (1996) has called a consumer-oriented corporation more concerned about accounting than accountability, and whose mission, defined largely through an appeal to excellence, is comprehended almost exclusively in terms of instrumental efficiency. David Harvey has gone further and argues that the “academy is being subjected to neoliberal disciplinary apparatuses of various kinds [while] also becoming a place where neoliberal ideas are being spread” and that democratically minded academics have an obligation to resist this onslaught within the university (cited in Pender, 2007, p. 14).

Writing about totalitarianism, the philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis (1991) insisted that one mark of such a regime is the disappearance of informed citizens who give substantive content to public space, wage ongoing struggles to preserve and expand the public *realms* capable of educating the totality of citizens to participate in and shape a democratic society, and comprehend that civic education is an “essential dimension of justice” (p. 140). What Castoriadis recognized was that matters of agency, critical thought, and politics itself were impossible under conditions in which education maintained a passive attitude toward power, democracy, and the future. This is especially relevant under the current regime of neoliberalism, when the crucial imperatives of vision and hope have been stripped from any understanding of the future, mortgaged to a demoralized and corrupt “democracy of money and military power” (Harvey cited in Pender, 2007, p. 16).

Corporate power, relations, and values lack any viable vision of the relationship between democracy and its future just as they lack a language for recognizing the power of antidemocratic forces to prepare the ground for an authoritarian regime. At the same time, it would be foolish to call for the complete decoupling of corporate money (as opposed to influence) from higher education. Corporations have a far more important and socially responsible role to assume as corporate citizens in supporting higher education, and this demands that we ask: How might corporations use their wealth, power, and influence to expand the crucial role that universities, especially the humanities, can play in promoting the public good, nurturing students to be critically engaged citizens, expanding research opportunities that address important social issues, and offering their services in connecting higher education to the new technologies? Given the vast underfunding

of the liberal arts, corporations could perform an incredibly important public service by investing in higher education with the funds, infrastructure, and technologies they increasingly need in order to provide a critical education to all students, at the same time working to shift corporate priorities away from financial investments that merely educate students as consumers, workers, and soldiers. Moreover, corporate financial investments should be entirely controlled by faculty and administrators, while publicly recognizing corporations for their generous gifts. This may seem a bit naive, but it is crucial that corporations have no role in setting the priorities that govern the purpose, meaning, organization, and day-to-day running of higher education. In this way, corporations can exercise their role as corporate citizens without bringing their power to bear on shaping educational priorities.

Finding our way to a more humane future demands a new politics, set of democratic values, and sense of the fragile nature of democracy. Effectively challenging the regime of market fundamentalism requires educating a new generation of scholars who not only defend higher education as a democratic public sphere but also frame their own agency as scholars willing to connect their research, teaching, knowledge, and service with broader democratic concerns over equality, justice, and an alternative vision of what the university might be and what society might become. Under the present circumstances, it is time to remind ourselves that academe may be one of the few public realms available, though hardly breathing, where we can provide the educational conditions for students to embrace pedagogical encounters as spaces of dialogue and unmitigated questioning, to imagine different futures, to become border crossers establishing a range of new connections and global relations, and to embrace a language of critique and possibility that responds to the urgent need to reclaim democratic values, identities, and practices.

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