

Towards Teaching in Public

Reshaping the Modern University

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Chapter 10

Beyond Teaching in Public: The University as a Form of Social Knowing

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This chapter brings together ideas and practices that constitute the concept of teaching in public, to consider the possibilities of a new form of higher education based on a redefined notion of public. Previous chapters have stressed the importance of maintaining a historical perspective in terms of the radical history of higher education and illustrated the ways in which that history can be used to inform and support progressive alternatives to the current privatized model. A part of the history of higher education is the way in which the state has emerged as an increasing form of control and regulation of universities, based on the imperatives of what has become a highly marketized society. It is, therefore, important to conceptualize the relationship between the state and the market in order to rethink the notion of public and, in the context of higher education, the concept of teaching in public.

This volume makes the point that, while it is important to provide a coherent theory of the relationship between the state and the market in relation to higher education, it is important to ground that theory in the everyday practice of teachers and students in universities. These relationships are not simply about enhancing quality and the student experience, but they are always deeply political. The book describes how teaching and learning activities can be arranged both between students and teachers, and between teachers and other teachers, in ways that suggest real alternatives to the managerialist notions of quality assurance and enhancement. It exposes the limits of the methodologies on which the protocols and practices of managerialism are based, and urges university teachers to find their own critical discourse to frame alternative progressive teaching practices. One of these protocols is the increasing reliance on technology as a means of delivery teaching and learning. Chapters in this book examined the limits of technologically driven solutions for pedagogical practices that fail to connect with the underlying logics out of which these new digitalized

machines are derived. Utilizing the conceptual framework of critical political economy, the book reveals the extent to which technology is based on the imperatives of capitalist work and, as such, is designed to replicate rather than replace the logic of the market and the consumer society, with all of its inequalities and exclusive practices.

The aim of this final chapter is to connect the key themes that have been used within the book to delineate the concept of teaching in public and to examine the extent to which the concept of public is a useful critical idea through which to recover higher education as a progressive intellectual project (Nixon 2011, Pesch 2006). It is clear from earlier chapters that there has always been a tension between the public and private provision of higher education and that, over the last three decades, the balance has swung increasingly towards private provision. The point will be made in this chapter that the concepts of the private and the public are not antithetical, but are complementary forms of regulation in a marketized society based on the productive process of value creation (Clarke 1991a, Polanyi 1975). For this reason, it is not possible to properly engage in a debate about the future form and trajectory of higher education without locating that debate in a much broader analysis of the relationship between the market and the state. This chapter therefore begins by setting out key features of the nature and form of market-state relations as a necessary basis for understanding the role and potentiality of the university of the future. In particular, it draws on the tradition of critical political economy to make the case for a new conceptualization of the university as a public institution.

The concept of the private and the public, in the ways in which they are usually formulated, are the ideological building blocks of liberal fundamentalism (Mill 1970, Clarke 1991a, Polanyi 1975, Pesch 2006). Any attempt to get beyond the liberal forms of regulation are treated with contempt by liberal intellectuals (Zizek 2002). The problem of how to escape the liberal fundamentalist framework in a marketized society has been explored throughout this volume, by looking at the very specific practical ways in which teachers are attempting to create progressive teaching practices. The approach to the concept of publicness adopted in this chapter is grounded in classical political economy, which makes a clear distinction between the private and the public spheres.

For classical political economy, the public sphere is identified as the way in which political power is organized across society. This organization of political power is referred to as the state. The private sphere relates primarily to the ways in which everyday social life is dominated by marketized and

commercial activities that are organized and regulated across society as part of a generalized economic system. In capitalist society, there is a clear connection between the different ways in which the political power of the state is used to ensure the logical imperatives of the economic sphere. In this chapter, the focus on publicness is through an exposition of theories of the state, with a recognition of the role of the university in building the modern nation state; that is, the importance of the relationship between the production of knowledge and the organization of political power. The importance of this relationship is largely ignored in the academic literature on theories of the state.

Any attempt to blur the distinction between the private and the public, without first grounding them as categories of political economy, simply produces a complexity that gives an impressionistic account of the matters under review. This chapter critically engages with the work of one of the most influential authors in the field of education writing in this genre, Stephen Ball, who provides an empirically rich but theoretically flawed impressionistic account of policy transformations in education. Ball attempts to reconceptualize the nature of the capitalist state by recasting the relationship between the private and the public using notions of hybridity, inter-twining, bumping, over-crowding and heterarchy. This obfuscates rather than enlightens any practical political action. This chapter establishes an engagement with Ball through a critical review of the theorizations of Jessop (2002), who has become an influential intellectual source for Ball and for other academics with a progressive agenda for the development of education policy.

A different framework on which to base a progressive project of higher education can be conceived, which can describe the private and the public, not as discrete forms of economic and political regulation, but rather as complementary forms of a universal and totalizing matrix which is defined, after Clarke (1991a), as the capital relation. The unique feature of the capital relation is that it contains a non-empirical as well as an empirical sphere of human sociability (Sohn-Rethel 1978). The combination of the non-empirical as well as the empirical form of social activity allows the creation of an entirely novel way of conceptualizing higher education, as a form of general intellectual activity not at the level of institutionalized higher education – the university of knowledge – but as knowledge at the level of society, or the knowing society.

The core political idea on which to base the university at the level of society is that capitalism has indeed improved the creativity and productive powers of humanity, but those powers have been used to alienate and oppress the direct producers of that knowledge and science (Postone 1993).

- The important political question then becomes how to re-appropriate knowledge and science so that the population which has produced this knowledge becomes the project and not the resource for a new progressive political programme (Bonefeld 1997). Thus, there is a need to re-compose the university so that it becomes not another form of political regulation but a new form of radical political science.

Educational Research and Theories of the State

Ball has written over a prolonged period a number of important accounts of the transformations in education policy in the UK, mainly with specific reference to schools but also to higher education (Ball 1990, 1994, 2006, 2007, 2008, Bowe *et al.* 1992, Gewirtz *et al.* 1995). A key issue for Ball is the relationship between the public and the private sector and how new forms of state regulation are re-composing new forms of educational provision. The strength of his work is the rigour and comprehensiveness of his empirical research and his willingness to engage in a state-centric account of changes in education policy.

Ball's work includes research into the politics and policy-making of education in relation to the national curriculum and special needs provision, as well as work on parental choice in the context of a marketized schools system. He refers to his work as 'policy sociology', drawing on the research methods of social science, a preoccupation with the concept of social class and the conceptual frameworks of critical social theory, including post-structuralism. Although his work is mainly about school-based education, he has written specifically about the relationship between the private and public sectors in education in ways that provide a model against which teaching in public might be conceived. While his conclusions may not be supported here, his work is framed in such a way as to provide a very useful practical and conceptual structure against which to set out the idea of teaching in public. The strength of his work is the strong sociological framework he brings to his research. The limitation is the theoretical model within which his state theory is based which, in the world of mainstream political science, is referred to as regulation theory. Ball relies heavily on the work of Jessop, which Ball describes as a 'set of tools' and a combination of 'economic geography and political sociology' (Ball 2007: 3). Ball, curiously, does not mention Jessop's position as the doyen of a particular version of Marxist state theory, and its origins in the writings of a particular style of political science (Meiksins Wood 1998, Clarke 1991b).

Key to Jessop's Marxist theory of the state is the way in which he formulates one of the central tenets of Karl Marx's mature social theory: the law of value. The relevance of the law of value for a discussion of private and public in the higher education sector is that the controversy surrounding the law of value provides a framework within which different models for state regulation are devised, and the context against which struggles against that regulation are framed. This controversy was particularly prevalent among social scientists in the 1970s and has re-emerged in the recent period in response to the latest instalment of capitalist crisis. A significant issue for political economy since the eighteenth century has been to establish the substance of the source of surplus value or, in other words, what makes something valuable in a world in which the absolute power of kings has been replaced by the relativistic law of private property (Dinerstein and Neary 2002).

Marx's major contribution to political economy is not that labour is the source of value, that point was already understood by political economists (Smith 2008, Ricardo 1971), but that both value and measurement of value are derived from the way in which capitalist work is organized and controlled at the level of society. In capitalist society, the value that forms the substance of labour was described by Marx as use value and exchange value. Use value is the usefulness of things. Exchange value is both the reason why things are produced and the measure of their usefulness; useful things are made not simply because they are useful, but in order to be exchanged. The measure of a thing's value is determined by the amount of social labour which goes into making it. This is not the direct amount of human energy expended on making a useful thing but rather the amount of labour expended as a proportion of the total amount of social labour available at the level of society. Marx refers to this as socially necessary labour time (Marx 1976). This notion of social labour enabled Marx to explain how exchange value, as a social measure and therefore a non-empirical substance, dominates the empirical world of everyday life.

In Marx's social theory, the relationship between the empirical and the non-empirical is defined as a theory of social form, which is why the concepts in Marx's analysis of capital are referred to as the money-form and the value-form. This version of Marxism as a theory of social form is completely avoided by liberal social scientists who are able to recognize the social world only in its divided forms: either as the empirical realm (sociology, political science, economics) or the non-empirical realm (philosophy, postmodernism) (Bonefeld and Holloway 1991). The strength of Marx's social theory, making it the most fully developed social theory of all, is its ability to

conceptualize both the empirical and non-empirical levels at the same time (Sohn-Rethel 1978).

The explanation is complex, and the law of value is, therefore, a controversial matter in Marxist social science. Since the 1970s, regulationist theorists have sought to reconcile Marxist economic analysis with developments in the twentieth century (R. Boyer 1990) by arguing that value is an economic category that needs to be supported by extra-economic forms of political activity (Meiksins Wood 1998). For Jessop (2002), as one of the leading regulation theorists, the production of value provides the structural framework within which accumulation of surplus value takes place, but it does not shape the political ways in which accumulation is achieved. This, Jessop (2002) argues, is the result of factors that lie outside the value form itself.

Jessop maintains that the law of value determines the shape and size of capitalist development although it does not fully determine the course of economic accumulation (Jessop 2002). As he puts it, 'although the basic parameters of capitalism are defined by the value form, this form alone is an inadequate guide to its nature and dynamics' (Jessop 2002: 159). He looks for solutions to this practical and theoretical problem in the concepts of 'accumulation strategy' and 'hegemonic projects'. For Jessop (2002) capitalist accumulation is the contingent outcome of the dialectical relationship between structures and strategies, with structures derived not only through the value form, but also through the 'emergent properties of social interaction' (Jessop 2002: 169). These structures are transformed by accumulation strategies, which involve readjusting the balance of class forces through ideological and political practices. For Jessop, the state exists as an external power imposing a form of regulatory authority onto these competing factors, including and supported by a particular 'hegemonic project' as part of an 'accumulation strategy' (Clarke 1991b: 50).

Ball (2007) seeks to enrich and inform Jessop's model by describing the new messy and complex forms of state regulation as they apply to education policy. He does this by identifying new types of institutions, as well as newly emerging policies of governance and meta-governance, all of which involve new discursive strategies and hegemonic projects within which intellectuals play a key role. In this process, Ball argues, the boundaries between the state and the market, between the public and the private and the left and right of the political spectrum are attenuated, so as to support the 'neoliberal market fantasy' (Ball 2007: 10) that the market operates autonomously from the state and its political frameworks, made real by the introduction of increased private sector provision and new forms of state education.

Following Jessop's theory of the state, Ball (2008) describes this form of regulation as the polycentric and the post-modern state, the key characteristic of which is 'a shift in the centre of gravity around which policy circles move' (Jessop 1998: 32, cited in Ball 2008: 747). As Ball (2008) argues, the new forms of state regulation are based on new types of experimental and strategic governance, with new networks and policy communities. He is keen to emphasize that the state does not give up its capacity to steer policy and that this is, in fact, a new form of modality of state power, and indeed a new form of state. Ball is clear, however, about its political limits – the achievement of political ends by political means, involving governing through governance to produce what he refers to as changes in the English education state. The result is a new form of accumulation strategy made up of businesses, quangos, other non-government organizations as well as the energy of entrepreneurs and venture philanthropists, which has produced a blurring of the public and private divide and the rise of networks over bureaucracies (Ball 2008). Ball is keen to argue that this is not a hollowing out of the state, or any kind of weakening of the state's capacity to steer policy. Rather, it is a filling in (Taylor 2000) of the state in a situation where the core executive retains substantial authoritative control over policy. While Ball is keen to maintain the centrality of the state as the driver of education policy, this blurring between the public and the private that he describes is not a sound basis for the construction of a reconstituted notion of the public on which an alternative model of higher education, organized around the notion of teaching in public, might be based. In the next section, the limits of this methodology and its consequences for progressive political pedagogy practice in universities will be discussed.

The Weird Non-empirical World of Capitalism

As has been shown, Ball's reinterpretation of the education state is based on Jessop's particular, politicized theory of the capitalist state and on an economic reading of Marx's labour theory of value. This version of Marx's law of value has been subject to much critique, as has the political strategy on which it is based (Meiksins Wood 1998). The first part of this section will provide a critical exposition of Jessop's Marxist theory of the state through a re-interpretation of Marx's mature theory and then examine its political implications for the development of a progressive form of higher education.

The key point to elaborate is that the concept of publicness and, therefore, teaching in public in the context of higher education is not a matter

that can be left to the discretion of the state. The state itself is an expression of the problem that we are attempting to resolve. The issues surrounding the concept of public in the progressive forms that we are discussing can only be resolved by struggling in and against the capitalist state and, in terms of teaching in public, struggling in and against the university. This is not, however, a struggle against the university as such but rather against what the university has become: a form of the capital relation. In order to deal with that question, we have to explore in more detail the nature of the state in capitalism.

There is another version of Marx for which value is the organizing principle for the whole society, including its repressions and the basis for forms of resistance. This version of Marx is based on a revolutionary critique of Marxism through a re-interpretation of Karl Marx's mature social theory. The approach was developed in the UK the 1970s and the 1980s through the journal *Capital and Class* and elaborated further in the *The State Debate* (Clarke 1991b, Holloway and Picciotto 1991) and *Open Marxism* (Bonfeld *et al.* 1992). This debate was much influenced by the work of *Autonomia* (Negri 1984, Wright 2002) in Italy in the 1970s and 1980s and further developed more recently through critical appraisals of Marx's social theory (Postone 1993). In this approach, the defining principle of Marx's social theory is the notion of social form.

The essence of Marx's revolutionary theory of production lies in his theory of surplus value, which provides the conditions through which the social world can be progressively transformed. According to Marx's theory of value, labour is the source and substance of all value in a society dominated, uniquely, by the production of surplus value. In capitalist society, surplus value is produced by the quantitative expansion of human energy in the process of industrial production. While the value of labour (human energy) is the value of all things (commodities), the value which labour produces is not fully recognized in the financial reward paid to workers (wages). The difference between the value of the reward and the value that is produced by workers constitutes surplus value. In this way, both value and surplus value are social, non-empirical, abstract measures, as well as abstract forms of social regulation and control.

The physical limitations of human labour, and the continuing resistance of workers to the imperatives of waged work, mean that human labour is removed by the representatives of capital from the process of production and replaced by technology and science. For the labour that remains, work is intensified physically and enhanced intellectually – with a clear distinction between mental and manual work. As labour is the source and substance of all value, this

joint process of the expulsion and enhancement of labour is profound. On one side, the expulsion of labour from the process of production means that the production of surplus value breaks down, resulting in dramatic declines in profitability. On the other side, the release of labour from the production process provides the opportunity for labour – and, therefore, for society as a whole – to develop its full creative capacity in ways that are antithetical to the logic of capitalist production. Both scenarios, singularly and together, spell crisis and catastrophe for capitalist society (Marx 2005).

In practice, capital has sought to restrict the development of discarded labour through the politics of oppression and the imposition of scarcity, poverty and violence. The politics of oppression has been met by resistance and struggle throughout the period in which history has been constituted as history (Meiksins Wood 2002) and forms the basis for the description of all history as being the history of class struggle (Marx 2004). The peculiarity of capital is that these imperatives of the politics of production are impersonal and indirect, enforced through the abstract law of value which exists as the political power of the state (public) and the economic power of money (private), each of which constitute the abstract power of the capital relation (Postone 1993, Clarke 1991a). In this sense, the state is a form of the capital relation: the struggle between capital and labour. In capital relation theory, the forms of the state, either in its polycentric and/or post-modern forms are not rational strategic responses to the crisis of capitalism, as they are for Ball, Jessop and regulation theorists in general, but are the forms in which struggle is constituted (Clarke 1991b, Holloway and Picciotto 1991).

It is important to stress that in this model the economic and political spheres are complementary forms of the capitalist relations of production and cannot be 'conceptualised independently of one another' (Clarke 1991b: 37). These forms are developed and challenged as the process of the reproduction of capitalism develops through the containment of the intensification of struggle (Clarke 1991b). Any progressive political project needs to recognize this complementarity and understand that any political project that seeks to challenge capitalism in the fragmented forms in which it is constituted is doomed to failure (Wainwright *et al.* 1979).

Clarke provides a devastating critique of Jessop's theory of the state, framed around his:

failure to grasp the fact that the class struggle, and at another level the activity of the state, is not a means of *resolving* the contradictions of capitalist accumulation, but is an *expression* of those contradictions. In this

sense, there can be no such thing as an 'accumulation strategy', because there is no agent, not even the state, which can stand above the process of accumulation to give it unity and coherence by resolving the contradictions inherent in capitalist accumulation. The state cannot stand about value relations, for the simple reason that the state is inserted in such relations as one moment of the class struggle over the reproduction of capitalist relations of production. (Clarke 1991b: 51)

For Clarke, the fundamental contradiction of capitalism is that capital:

In reproducing itself also reproduces the working class, but it does reproduce the working class as its passive servant, it reproduces the working class as the barrier to its own reproduction. This is the fundamental contradiction of the capitalist mode of production, whose concrete unfolding constitutes the history of capitalism. (Clarke 1991b: 190)

The revolutionary and counter-intuitive strength of Clarke's interpretation of Marx is the way in which he recognizes that 'capital sets up barriers to its own reproduction that can only be broken down through its successful conduct of the class struggle' (Clarke 1991b: 92-3). While capital seeks to make use of the state, 'the state is not a functional agency that can resolve these contradictions. It is rather a complementary form through which capital attempts to pursue the class character in a vain attempt to suspend its contradictory character' (Clarke 1991b: 193). In other words, 'the state is not simply a tool of capital, it is an arena of class struggle' (Clarke 1991b: 195). If the political class struggle goes beyond the limits set by the expanded reproduction of capital, the result is the breakdown of the material reproduction of society (Clarke 1991b: 195). It is clear that Jessop's inability to

provide an adequate account of the contradictory unity of the process of capitalist reproduction means that it is the state that has to carry the burden of establishing the unity and coherence of the 'social formation' which it is not able to do. (Clarke 1991b: 49)

The political consequences of Jessop's Marxism-lite, and of Ball's account of state theory, are not simply academic, but promote attitudes and activities that are unlikely to challenge in a fundamental way the logic of capitalist power, leading to accommodation and appeasement and, ultimately, failure and defeat. This lack of any real critical capacity is evident from

Ball's limited suggestions as to how the world of education might deal with its current predicament.

A similar form of practical paralysis can be found in Jessop's analysis. Jessop (2008) applies his theoretical framework to the current role, nature and purposes of universities and the ways in which they are governed in the context of a globalized market system. In this work, hegemonic projects have become 'hegemonic economic imaginaries' (Jessop 2008: 15) through the prism of what he refers to as 'cultural political economy': extra economic activities that include discourse analysis, semiotics, semantics, rhetoric and performance or 'the social production of intersubjective meaning' (Jessop 2008: 15). Cultural political economy tries to make what it defines as the hyper-complexity of the natural and social world amenable to sociopolitical and economic analysis through the construction of a series of meaningful economic and extra-economic subsets that can be identified by their numerous regulations and strategies. In this way, it is possible to identify each subset as a discrete economic imaginary with its own operational and constitutive force. Jessop (2008) reveals the most prominent of these economic imaginaries as the knowledge-based economy and charts its rise as a main motivation for the development of educational policy at the national and international level, as well as its particular implications for higher education as a set of practices that impacts directly on economic competitiveness, calling for a realignment of the university, business and the state in a new paradigm of 'academic capitalism'.

Conveniently for our purposes, Jessop (2008) uses Ball (2007) in this analysis as one of his main points of reference. While Jessop's (2008) interpretation offers a neat analysis of the current predicament of higher education, it is a world away from teaching practice, nor does it provide any of the negative consequences on universities nor does it suggest any strategy or hegemonic project, even at the level of its own cultural, discursive, rhetorical or performative framework, by which the current dominant orthodoxy might be challenged. Cultural political economy does allow for challenge, indeed a key aspect of hegemonic imaginaries is that they are the outcome of struggle between different sets of actors: trades unions, interest groups, think tanks, social movements, world institutions (OECD and the World Bank), political parties and the mass media (Jessop 2008). It is, however, essentially an extraneous descriptive account of policy-making, with no critical dynamic within the theoretical framework itself (Meiksins Wood 1998).

For Clarke and his collaborators, the form of the capitalist state is not the result of hegemonic projects, imaginary or otherwise, but is the real outcome

of class struggle within an historical and logical framework. This theoretical model identifies the significance of a revolutionary subject operating immanently within the form of the capital relation, wherein each capitalist institution or category is the outcome of struggle and is subject to transformation. This position has been described as *In and Against the State* (London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group 1980).

Writing in the UK in the 1970s, the London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group (1980) were seeking to find ways to counteract attempts by the government to dismantle the welfare state. Their book sought to provide everyday examples of the practical resistance of public sector workers, in the context of a theoretical conceptualization of the capitalist state as a form of the capital relation. The Edinburgh Weekend Return Group (1980) identified a number of strategies of resistance, including defining the problem in political rather than merely economic terms, as well as alternative forms of organization, overcoming individualization and defining problems in terms of the progressive logic of the lessons learnt from the working-class struggle. Following the inspiration of *In and Against the State* (London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group 1980), teaching in public seeks to focus this radical approach to institutional change, at the level of higher education institutions, but in a way that deals with higher education not simply as an instrument of the capitalist state, but as a form of the capital relation.

The significance of this account for a reconstituted notion of the public is that it demands that the possibility of institutional and social transformation lies in the hands of the workers on whose labour the social world is constituted. It now becomes possible to conceive the university as a particular social and institutional form of the capital relation that has itself been derived out of class struggle and is, therefore, susceptible to further progressive transformations. In what follows, the analysis of immanent struggle will be extended 'in and against' the university to include intellectual work and academic labour, so as to ground the concept of teaching in public in radical and alternative forms of higher education.

The University as a Political Category

While Marxist social science has done much to advance state theory, it has done very little to advance the development of how we conceive of the university as a political theoretical concept and, therefore, to provide the basis for a progressive political project about the production of knowledge in a post-capitalist society. In other words, it is important to consider the

university as a previously unacknowledged part of state theory with an important role to play in the way in which political power is organized at the level of society. The university has a role in nation-state building (Readings 1996), but this has not been acknowledged in discussions relating to Marxist theories of the state nor as a form of radical political science. In order to conceive another theory and practice for a progressive university, it is necessary to understand the university as the relationship between its institutional (empirical) and social (non-empirical) forms.

The Speculative University

The non-empirical world was well known to the inventors of the modern university who sought to establish the legitimacy for higher learning through the practice of political philosophy; that is, the power of abstraction. The idea of the university as a non-empirical form was derived from the philosophy out of which the modern European university was born in Berlin at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The founders of the University of Berlin (Hegel, Humboldt, Schleiermacher and Fichte) were on a mission to design the university on the basis of their idealistic political philosophies (Lyotard 2005). The problem was how to reconcile the metaphysics associated with these ideals with the mechanics of constructing a civilized nation-state; 'science for the sake of science' against the 'spiritual and moral training of the nation' (Lyotard 2005: 32). This conundrum was resolved not by grounding the pursuit of knowledge in a narrow nationalism, nor indeed in any particular purpose, but in a system of philosophical speculation (Lyotard 2005).

For the new university, legitimacy was neither to be found in the preoccupation of scientists, nor populist science, nor usefulness, nor crude notions of the will of the people, nor serving the interests of the state and civil society, nor through the idea that humanity finds dignity and freedom through knowledge nor in the pure positivism and functionalism of the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. For the German Idealists, the speculative university was to be legitimated through its ability to be 'the knowledge of all knowledge': an 'encyclopaedia' of speculative discourse, within which knowledge was to be valued not in terms of its own particular 'truth-value', but in terms of its relation to what society knows about itself as a universal whole (Lyotard 2005: 34–5) or knowledge at the level of society.

Within the philosophy expounded by the German Idealist, this system of encyclopaedic knowing was conjured up and made subject through the

notion of the 'Spirit' or 'Life' (Lyotard 2005: 35). Through the 'Life of the Spirit', knowledge is not only able to name and to know itself, but is also able to provide recognition and legitimacy for the institutions through which knowledge itself exists, the nation state and the university. The speculative university writes its own narrative history in which it sits as the embodiment, the institutionalized subject of its own enchanted and enlightened ideals (Lyotard 2005).

The new university appeared protected by the progressive nature of its optimistic abstract speculations linked to the process of European nation building. However, this idealistic project was undermined, first when the project of nation-making turned against itself to become a process of nation-destroying in the form of two massively destructive global wars, and secondly, when advances in revolutionary science challenged the very scientific principles on which speculative science is based (Kuhn 1962). Lyotard described this crisis of metaphysics as the post-modern condition, with severe implications for the modern university, for whom progress and metaphysics have been its defining characteristic: 'the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which has in the past relied on it' (Lyotard 2005: xxiv). Lyotard describes how the metaphysical has been undermined by its own scientific conventions and the collapse of the principle of progress, on which this historical trajectory was pre-supposed. In other words, science has turned against itself, and emerged as postmodernism, or non-science (Kay and Mott 1982). In the world of the post-modern, speculation has become scepticism, that looks for reassurance in positivism, performativity, proofs and profit (Lyotard 2005). Faced with this predicament the speculative university is unable to defend itself from the pragmatics of the business university and the newly emerging knowledge economy.

Rebuilding the University

The question now becomes: is it possible to ground the speculative university in a way that will recover its lost legitimacy? In this section, it will be argued that it is not enough simply to make claims for higher education based on a new ethic of notions of civic responsibility (Deem *et al.* 2007), civic republicanism (Fuller 2001), cosmopolitanism (Nixon 2011) or increasing forms of democratization (Delanty 2001). Rather, it is necessary to argue much more fundamentally about the nature of higher education or about the idea of the university as a practical (empirical) and philosophical (non-empirical) problem. This will be done by seeking to

ground the political philosophy on which the modern European university was founded through an engagement with Marx's mature social theory and the ways in which Marx's revolutionary social theory is being used to frame, in a real (empirical) context: teaching and learning at the University of Lincoln.

The most devastating critique of political philosophy is the work of Karl Marx. Through his work on critical political economy, Marx grounded the political philosophy developed by the German Idealists in the real world history of class struggle, written through the categories of critical political economy (Clarke 1991a, Postone 1993). While Marx did not develop a systematic theory of higher education (Small 2005), he did write about knowledge as a form of abstraction or a system of knowing. While the German Idealist projected the 'Life of the Spirit' through the life of the conscious mind, Marx grounded the development of knowledge in the productive processes of capitalist production. Marx argued that through the improvement of capitalist production processes human society had become exponentially more creative and productive, but that human knowledge had been used to oppress and alienate the direct producers of knowledge. The purpose of communism, he maintained, is to re-appropriate for humanity that which had been produced in an alienated form.

Marx (2005) discusses this process in the *Grundrisse* through the notion of the 'general intellect' and 'general social knowledge'

Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules etc. These are products of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of the human will over nature, or of human participation in nature, or of human participation in nature. They are organs of the human brain, created by the human hand, the power of knowledge objectified. The development of fixed capital (machinery) indicates to what extent general social knowledge has become a direct force of production, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it. (Marx 2005: 706)

In our marketized society, the 'general intellect' and 'general social knowledge' have been appropriated by the expansive process of capitalist production and turned against the individuals, academics and students, who produced that knowledge. The logic of the expansive process of capitalist production is used as the justification for the continuing destruction of the social, cultural, natural, animal and human world. In capitalist society, the

main manifestation of this form of appropriation has become the university and the system of knowledge creation it supports.

Is it possible then to re-conceive what Marx described as the 'general intellect' and 'general social knowledge', to see the university not as a particular institutional form of the capital relation, the university of knowledge, but as a new social form at the level of the general and the social: in a grounded notion of the knowing society? As a general social form, the university becomes the limit of what we know about ourselves as a society, that is knowledge at the level of society, with the capacity to expand what we know as science – natural and social, the humanities, arts and culture: and to do this exponentially, limited only by our own capacity and our need to know.

It is important to defend what has been achieved by the public university and the most progressive aspects of higher education. But, the public sphere is only one side of a complementary process – the other side being the private sphere – both of which have emerged through class struggle to maintain the capital relation. Therefore, there can be no real future in the notion of the public and publicness as it is currently conceived. A really progressive project must attempt to reclaim knowledge at the level of society for the social individuals that produced it and, in so doing, dissolve the contemporary corporate university and reconstitute the university in another more progressive form.

The contributors to this volume have created an outline for how we might go about re-defining the idea of the university and with it the meaning and purpose of higher education. While the writers in this volume do not get beyond the current limits of the institutional form of the university, each in its own way demonstrates the nature of those limits and, in some cases, ways in which those limits might be deconstructed. In that sense, work in this volume might be said to be written 'in and against' the current social form of higher education and is engaged in a struggle over the idea of the university. Both the Student Consultants on Teaching project and Student as Producer politicize the current state of higher education and find ways to re-define the relationship between teachers and students in the production of learning events and knowledge. The chapter on the historical development of higher education in the nineteenth century shows the ways in which radical ideas for an alternative way of learning were developed as a challenge to the mainstream provision so as to provide an inspiration for the invention of new forms of social knowing. The history of higher education in the twentieth century, up to the current provision, demonstrates the role of the state in reducing the radical parameters of higher education into forms of teaching and learning that can be controlled and regulated in

accordance with market principles. The chapters on the impact of new machines in the labour process and new forms of digital technology for teaching and learning demonstrates the danger of assuming that what appears to be a progressive new practice can be yet another form of dehumanizing regulation and control. The work on the law of value around the commodification of higher education through the provision of new technologies and open educational resources points us in the direction of critical political economy as a way of articulating a more radical discourse on teaching and learning that is based in everyday pedagogic practice. The chapter on peer observation argues for the importance of such a critique to expose the limits of managerialism.

This book is written in a moment of crisis for higher education. This crisis is part of the much wider crisis that extends to our whole marketized society and its inability to reproduce itself. The key point about this book is that the debate about whether the private sector or the public realm constitutes the more progressive basis for the development of higher education is a sterile argument. The private (economic) and the public (state) are complementary forms of the capital relation, which are the expression of the contradiction that lies at the core of capitalist production, which can only ever exist as crisis and catastrophe.

We have, in other words, to think much harder about how to create a progressive and sustainable future. The argument set out here is that in order to do this we need to raise the debate about the future of the university and of the society out of which it is derived to the level of society. This means de-constructing the knowledge economy and replacing it with the idea of a knowing society. In the current crisis, ways of knowing have been reduced to forms of knowledge to be transformed into money in the marketized economy. In a situation where the market economy has once again shown itself to be unsustainable, ways of knowing reduced to the knowledge economy lose all capacity for resilience and are unable to confront the crisis and the catastrophe. In this moment, the demand for a more general level of knowing becomes irresistible, and knowing reduced to the level of the economy is replaced by knowledge at the only level at which the origins of the crisis can be revealed and comprehensively addressed: knowledge at the level of society. It is this knowledge at the level of society that we refer to as the knowing society. The university that we need to create is not another institutional form of higher education, the University of Knowledge. It is, rather, the unbounded limit of what we know about ourselves, that is higher and higher education, which can emerge in any number of sustainable and life enhancing forms.