



***The Colonization of Lifeworlds of Education
by Work: Restoration and Recoupling
of Lifeworld and System in the Inner Self***

SUMMARY

The argument is raised that, in an age of the networked, connected society in an information-rich environment with communication possibilities as never before experienced or made possible, the displacement of educational virtues of morality, ethics and the development of all-round human beings, by those of money, labour, power and work are speeding apace, and the disconnect between system and lifeworld is increasing. Drawing initially on the work of Habermas, in which the colonization of the lifeworld occurs by system imperatives of rationalization, labour, money and power, the paper argues that such moves are manifested starkly in discourses of the relation between education and work, and five areas are introduced in which the links operate. The marketization and commodification of education, together with its incorporation into the service of capital and labour, are attested through a short worked example of one small territory within the larger context of China. Then, taking a lead from Sertillanges and Habermas's later work, the paper argues for: (a) a reaffirmation of the importance of moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions of education; (b) the breaking of a narrowly instrumental, capital-acquisitive view of education as serving the jobs market and social control and towards a liberating view of education as communicative action and the development of being rather than simply behaving; (c) the importance of transcendence and immanence; and, thereby, (d) moves towards the re-integration of system and lifeworld in participating subjects.

→ **KEYWORDS** – COLONIZATION OF THE SOCIAL WORLD

STRESZCZENIE

Kolonizacja światów społecznych edukacji przez pracę: Odbudowa relacji pomiędzy światem społecznym i systemem w obrębie wewnętrznego „ja” jednostki

Podnoszony bywa argument, że w czasach połączonego społeczeństwa sieciowego, w środowisku bogatym w informacje, o niespotykanych nigdy wcześniej możliwościach komunikacyjnych, wychowawcze cnoty związane z moralnością, etyką i całościowym rozwojem człowieka są w coraz większym stopniu zastępowane przez pieniądze, pracę i władzę, co powoduje coraz szybsze poszerzanie się przepaści pomiędzy systemem a światem społecznym. Wychodząc od koncepcji Habermasa, według którego kolonizacja świata społecznego dokonuje się przez systemowe imperatywy racjonalizacji, pracy, pieniędzy i władzy, autor referatu utrzymuje, że takie przesunięcia w jaskrawy sposób przejawiają się w dyskursach dotyczących relacji między edukacją a pracą. Relacje te występują w pięciu obszarach. Urynkowienie i utowarowienie edukacji, wraz z wprzęgnięciem jej w służbę kapitału i pracy, przedstawione zostały na przykładzie jednego małego terytorium w Chinach. Następnie, czerpiąc inspirację z myśli Sertillanges’a i późnego Habermasa, artykuł postuluje: (a) potwierdzenie ważności moralnych, etycznych i duchowych wymiarów kształcenia; (b) odejście od wąsko instrumentalnej, kapitalistyczno-zachłannej wizji edukacji służebnej wobec rynku pracy i kontroli społecznej w stronę wyzwalającego widzenia edukacji jako działania komunikacyjnego i rozwoju bycia, a nie tylko zachowań; (c) ważność transcendencji i immanencji; a przez to (d) działania zmierzające w kierunku reintegracji systemu i świata społecznego uczestniczących w nim podmiotów.

→ **SŁOWA KLUCZOWE – HABERMAS, KOLONIZACJA ŚWIATA SPOŁECZNEGO**

Introduction

It is a great irony that, in an age marked by the rise of the networked, connected society with an information-rich environm¹ and communication possibilities as never before experienced or made possible, the deformation of education into instrumental rather than communicative action and the replacement of discourses of morality and ethics by those of money and power are

¹ Cf. M. Castells, *Communication Power*, Oxford 2013.

speeding apace. The all-round educative function of education is being overtaken by a more narrowly defined purposive-rational, strategic, instrumental role for education in the service of preparing students for the world of work. System and lifeworld, society and values, ethics and education become disconnected; discussions of values and ethics become silenced or relegated to low down the list of priorities in education; the all-round development of students is re-interpreted as the provision of suitable consumers and labourers for the employment market; and the moral imperative of education² becomes reinterpreted as ensuring that minimal performance standards are met. As Habermas comments:

a gap seems to be opening up between a prickly moral consciousness and the impotence in the face of the structurally imposed switch to strategic conduct.³

This paper argues that education is increasingly being brought solely or largely into the service of preparation for employment, and that this degrades its liberating, enabling function. Using Habermas's⁴ analysis of the 'colonization of the lifeworld' of citizens by the 'steering mechanisms' of society and system requirements in the advancing rationalization of society, the paper suggests, that, in relation to the link between education and the world of work, five trends can be observed: the colonization of education by market forces; the purposes of education being increasingly defined as preparation for work; the rise of credentialism; the bureaucratization of education; and the narrowing of curricula to create a disciplined workforce. Then, taking a lead from Habermas's later work *An Awareness of What Is Missing*,⁵ the

² For example M. Fullan, *The Moral Imperative Realized*, Corwin 2011. For an example of the power of this in China, see Y. Zhao, *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon?*, San Francisco 2014.

³ J. Habermas, *A reply*, in: *An Awareness of What Is Missing*, eds. J. Habermas, N. Brieskorn, M. Reder et al., trans. C. Cronin, Cambridge 2010, p. 74.

⁴ Cf. J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. T. McCarthy, Boston 1984; J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two: Lifeworld and System*, trans. T. McCarthy, Boston 1987.

⁵ J. Habermas, *An awareness of what is missing*, in: *An Awareness of What Is Missing*, op. cit., pp. 15-23.

paper argues for: (a) a reaffirmation of the importance of moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions of education; (b) the breaking away from a narrowly instrumental, capital-acquisitive view of education as serving the jobs market and towards a liberating view of education as communicative action; (d) a reaffirmation of the significance of the humanitarian functions of education, and the importance of transcendence and immanence; and, thereby, (c) moves towards the re-integration of system and lifeworld in participating subjects. In this enterprise, the striving towards the intellectual life, introduced by Sertillanges, marks an important initial step.

The paper deliberately takes a particular reading of the relation between education and work, a contestable view designed to expose key issues in the tension between education and work, and to highlight the areas in which such a narrow link can be augmented or even replaced. This paper recognizes that work has countless benefits; it can dignify people, fulfill them existentially and bring great happiness to them,⁶ lift people and, indeed, nations out of poverty, build capacity and transform societies. However, the paper takes a different approach, examining the issues raised when work and education become so strongly linked as to exclude a wider view of key purposes of education. In the space of a short paper, it is not possible to do justice either to Habermas's fully worked analysis of society, nor of the criticisms of his views. Work and education overlap hugely. Whilst the paper recognizes the importance of education in preparing students for employment, and whilst it accepts that work can be extremely fulfilling, even defining, for individuals, it argues that, if education is to enable citizens to recover the good life, then priorities in education must be redefined and broadened to include the development of the intellectual life of participants.

1. The Colonization of Education

Though perhaps not the first choice of favourites amongst religious communities, Habermas's magisterial analysis of the rationalization of society into instrumental reason and bureaucratization

⁶ For example L. Lyubomirsky, *Job's worth*, "RSA Journal", 2014, issue 3, p. 25.

which penetrates and colonizes the lifeworld of its members in his two-volume *The Theory of Communicative Action*,⁷ building on his earlier theory of *systematically distorted communication*,⁸ provides a gripping analysis of modernity in which “[t]he communicative potential of reason has been simultaneously developed and distorted in the course of capitalist modernization.”⁹ Rationalization, he argues, is a necessary element of emancipation as it moves to a “disenchanted” world of achieved consensus through communication, and yet it also marks the move towards greater impersonal controls placed on spheres of human action, i.e. rationalization of society risks rationalization of the lifeworld: “the lifeworld is gradually reduced to a satellite of the system.”¹⁰ For Habermas, as for the Weberian analysis which he cites, the movement towards purposive-instrumental rationality not only characterizes modern society but is also its undoing, as the intrusion into, and rationalization of, the lifeworld brings with it increasing bureaucracy.¹¹

Increasing bureaucratization, closely connected to rampant hierarchy, reduce the capability of the individual, indeed of the social group, to make meaning of, or to control, that bureaucracy. Bureaucratization takes on a life of its own, overriding agency with system imperatives. Modern western society, for Weber, whilst striving to improve freedoms and rationality, succeeds in achieving just the opposite: a loss of meaning (*Sinnverlust*) and a loss of freedom (*Freiheitsverlust*). The process of bureaucratization is as constricting as it is inevitable.¹²

Habermas suggests that Weber’s ‘iron cage’ of bureaucracy and instrumental reason arises because he gives too scant attention to the emancipatory potential of communicative,

⁷ J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, op. cit.; idem, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two: Lifeworld and System*, op. cit.

⁸ Cf. J. Habermas, *On systematically distorted communication*, “Inquiry”, vol. 13, no. 3, 1970, pp. 205-218.

⁹ J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. F.D. Lawrence, Massachusetts 1987, p. 315.

¹⁰ D. Ingram, *Habermas and the Dialectic of Reason*, Yale 1987, p. 127.

¹¹ Cf. J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, op. cit., p. 429.

¹² Cf. *ibidem*, p. 248.

moral-practical and aesthetic-expressive forms of rationality.¹³ Weber, he argues, is unable to account for the potential of society to change itself and thus displays the 'one-sidedness' that he himself condemns in modern society,¹⁴ the supremacy of the technical cognitive interest¹⁵ and the "technicizing of the lifeworld."¹⁶

Habermas argues that the evolution of society is marked by the uncoupling of the system (social systems, organizations and institutions of, and in, society, and structural determinants of society, with their power to determine or influence individual agency) and the lifeworld by 'steering mechanisms' of, and 'strategic action' in, a society which is becoming increasingly bureaucratized. The 'colonization' of the lifeworld takes place as 'steering mechanisms from the system colonize the lifeworld.'¹⁷ Purposive rationality – instrumental reason – enters into the everyday fabric of individuals' lives – their lifeworlds. Habermas suggests that the lifeworld

is made up from sedimentations of formerly actually present experiences that are bound to situations. Inversely, every actually present experience is inserted into the flow of lived experiences and into a biography.¹⁸

Where does work fit into this rationalized, bureaucratized world, and how is work a 'steering mechanism', not only *per se*, but with reference to education?

One of the 'steering mechanisms' of society is labour – work – and in the present context this enters the lifeworld provided by education. Work is a pre-eminent feature of everyday life, of our lifeworlds. For many, it defines us and fulfils our existential ambitions, societal and communitarian contributions, and our

¹³ Cf. J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two: Lifeworld and System*, op. cit., p. 303.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 397.

¹⁵ Cf. J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. J. Shapiro, London 1972.

¹⁶ J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two: Lifeworld and System*, op. cit., p. 183.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 173.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 128.

advancement of the good life. But for others it is about survival.¹⁹ There is an antinomial character to work: whilst it can emancipate, it can also constrict, and it is this contradiction that provides the basis of the analysis here, of work and education.

We are witness to the increasing alignment of work and education, or, rather, the colonization of education by the backwash effect of preparing students for work. This paper argues that, in an over-rationalized, bureaucratized world, labour permeates education in several ways:

- The colonization of education by market forces, mentality and practices;
- The purposes of education being increasingly defined as preparation for work;
- The rise of credentialism;
- The bureaucratization of education;
- The narrowing of curricula and the hidden curriculum to create a disciplined workforce.

The colonization of the lifeworld and the process of rationalization of the lifeworld, spectacularly through the nature and practices of labour, bring increasing depersonalization, alienation,²⁰ anomie and unfreedom; this characterizes the experience of work for many employees. Such a process is effected by: (a) the operation of ‘steering mechanisms’ of money and power,²¹ outlined by Habermas (and Parsons before him), both key elements of the ownership – the means – and the social relations of production, capital and work; and (b) the ‘uncoupling of system and lifeworld’²². The lifeworld becomes a subsystem of purposive-rational

¹⁹ See Y. Zhao, *Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon?*, op. cit, for an analysis of how this occurs in China.

²⁰ Indeed Zeldin argues that the rise of specialized knowledge for work creates isolation and a reduced ability for communicate to communicate meaningfully with each other. See T. Zeldin, *Tomorrow’s work*, “RSA Journal”, 2014, issue 3, pp. 30-35.

²¹ Cf. J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, op. cit., p. 342.

²² J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two: Lifeworld and System*, op. cit., pp. 153-197.

action, and has become technicized and subordinated to the system,²³ of which the world of work is a major component.²⁴

Money and power are “normatively anchored in the lifeworld”²⁵ and exert great force on society, be it in its systems or the lifeworlds of its members, i.e. the necessity and practices of work respectively. Indeed Habermas argues that the recovery of the power of participants to appropriate their own existential futures, collectively realized, can reduce the alienation and reification brought about by money, power and the exploitation of labour.

Adding to the ‘steering mechanisms’ of money and power are labour in a capitalist world, and the marketization of everything; everything has its price. The push to gear the lifeworld of individuals to the production of capital through labour rehearses the familiar Marxian analysis of the domination of superstructural elements of society by its economic base. In such an analysis, the labour power of individuals has been exploited to the advantage of the owners of capital. Human labour power becomes a commodity, indeed for many the only commodity that they have to sell for exchange value in the capital marketization of society.²⁶

As Braverman writes:

[L]abor power has become a commodity. Its uses are no longer organized according to the needs and desires of those who sell it, but rather according to the needs of its purchasers, who are, primarily, employers seeking to expand the value of their capital.²⁷

Labour power creates surplus value – profit – for the owners of capital whilst pauperizing the workers and reproducing the conditions for their own domination. Money, power and labour in the economic engine of society are not neutral; they operate in the interests of the powerful, the owners of capital and the wealthy.

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ Zhao provides an excellent analysis of how this operates in China, through control of education and entry to prestigious government employment and power through education and its related examination system. See Y. Zhao, *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon?*, op. cit., pp. 111ff.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 270.

²⁶ See also D. Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*, London 2014, pp. 63-64.

²⁷ H. Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capitalism*, New York 1974, p. 57.

Where does education fit into this scenario? Education has become colonized by the imperatives of labour which, in turn, operates on neo-liberal, market ideology. In many societies, education, whilst clearly being a supreme instrument for greater freedoms, equality, personal and social development and enrichment, societal and individual emancipation, simultaneously has been immensely successful in developing capital accumulation for the benefit of the few (*vide* the increasing inequalities of income between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' in societies across the world) and for furthering the strategic goals of those in power on society.²⁸

The story goes further. Education has become infected with, colonized by, market mentality. Capitalist mentality has experienced massive success in penetrating the spheres of education. Education becomes another commodity to be bought and sold like a length of cloth. The rise of private, for profit education globally is witness to this; education is 'big business'. In Marxian terms, education becomes fetishized and, in Gramscian terms, capital and labour have accommodated and incorporated education. In education and the marketization of education, under the guise of the putative benefits of market forces in education – choice, freedom, efficiency, standards, competition, diversity, consumerism, individualism, quality and information²⁹ – what we have is a minefield of problems.³⁰ These include, for example: putting education in service of capital and labour to produce capital; the reproduction of inequality; the extension of standardized national curricula and standardized, formatted minds;³¹ assessment, testing and surveillance without end;³² an emphasis on 'performance' to the neglect of 'being'; heavy prescription and proscription; teachers as executors or operatives of others'

²⁸ China is a very clear example of the colonization of education and the lifeworld of students by system imperatives, see Y. Zhao, *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon?*, op. cit.

²⁹ For example: Department for Education, *Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools*, London 1992.

³⁰ See also S. Sterling, *Sustainable Education – Re-Visioning Learning and Change*, Darlington 2001; R. LeFay, *An ecological critique of education*, "International Journal of Children's Spirituality", vol. 11, no. 1, 2006, pp. 35-45.

³¹ Cf. P. Sacks, *Standardized Minds*, Cambridge 1999.

³² Cf. A. Hargreaves, *Curriculum and Assessment Reform*, Oxford 1989.

diktats in the conception of which they had no part, i.e. the separation of conception and execution;³³ the ‘steering at a distance’³⁴ by governments who dictate what should be taught, how, and how to assess it³⁵ and then leave schools and educational institutions to carry out their instructions; a silencing of debate or contestation about the purposes, nature and contents of education; and, somewhere low down in the pile, students. This is Habermas’s ‘strategic action’ and instrumental reason *par excellence*. As Apple wrote so tellingly and presciently two decades ago:

Thus, it is indeed possible – actually probable – that market-oriented approaches in education (even when coupled with a strong state over a system of national curriculum and testing) will exacerbate already existing and widespread class and race divisions. “Freedom” and “choice” in the new educational market will be for those who can afford them. “Diversity” in schooling will simply be a more polite word for the condition of educational apartheid.³⁶

Instead of people who participate in the struggle to build and rebuild our educational, cultural, political, and economic relations, we are defined as consumers (of that “particularly acquisitive class type”). This is truly an extraordinary concept, for it sees people as either stomachs or furnaces. We use and use up. We do not create. Someone else does that. This is disturbing enough in general, but in education it is truly disabling... [W]e place at great risk especially those students who are already economically and culturally disenfranchised by our dominant institutions... [W]e live in a society with identifiable winners and losers. In the future, we may say that the losers made poor “consumer choices” and, well, that is the way markets operate, after all. But is this society really only one vast market?³⁷

More recently, Sandel³⁸ raises the question of whether there are moral and civic goods that are beyond markets, but we see

³³ Cf. M.W. Apple, *Education and Power*, London 1983.

³⁴ S.J. Ball, *The Education Debate*, Bristol 2008.

³⁵ For a very clear example of how this operates, see Zhao’s analysis of education in China: Y. Zhao, *Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon?*, op. cit., pp. 161ff.

³⁶ M.W. Apple, *The politics of official knowledge: Does a national curriculum make sense?*, “Teachers College Record”, vol. 95, no. 2, 1993, p. 236.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 238.

³⁸ Cf. M. Sandel, *What Money Can’t Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*, London 2013, p. 203.

education overtaken by the imperatives of capital and labour on market forces and market mentality: a commodity for buying and selling. Little wonder, then, that many students see the purposes of education as 'getting a job'. The instrumentalism of education, in which education becomes largely a preparation for the world of work and a service of capital accumulation for one sector of society at the expense of other sectors, increases the alignment between education and work, shrinking the role of education into the sphere of finding and keeping a job.

A second way in which the world of work enters education is through the rise of curricula that place heavy emphasis on employability and job preparation. Education has a duty to prepare students for the world of work, for example in terms of (a) work-related substantive knowledge, skills and competencies and (b) dispositions, personality, interpersonal and intrapersonal behaviour. In this enterprise, curricula create a disciplined workforce in a dual sense: understanding disciplinary knowledge – subject matter – and understanding how to behave appropriately – self-discipline (and here the moves towards student-centred learning and the affordances of information and communications technology to support this are powerful), interpersonal discipline and, indeed compliance. At issue here is the extent to which education serves these purposes to the exclusion of more liberal curricula. The mission statements of higher education institutions, the rise of technical and vocational education, the widespread use of graduate employment as indicators of 'quality', and the development of curricula geared towards employment – reinforced by external accreditation by professional bodies concerned with the world of work – all attest to the increasing instrumentalism of education, in which education is less a value in itself and more a service, fulfilling a consumerist function, and serving the employment market.

The issue here is the extent to which this excludes or relegates other purposes of education, for example: its civilizing and humanizing purposes; the promotion of ethics, values and morals; the pursuit of understanding and improving the human condition; the development of the all-round person rather than simply or solely the employed operative; the development of questioning, challenge and contestation; and the promotion of social justice and societal advancement. Contrast this with the massive emphasis placed on education for employment, in

which education is no longer an end in itself, its own reward, but largely a means, a preparation for work. Of course, education can do both, prepare for employment and the development of the whole gamut of issues mentioned earlier in this paragraph; the question is one of balance, of coverage, of purposes.

A third way in which the world of work enters education is through the rise of credentialism, with credentials being the passport to securing and sustaining employment. Students, both at school and in higher and further education, are becoming driven by, and obsessed with, gaining qualifications, marks, passing and failing. It is an obsession fuelled, indeed orchestrated, by governments, schools, assessment and examination agencies. Assessment, too, is now big business (the Educational Testing Service alone, the largest private testing agency in the world, has an annual budget of 900 million US dollars). The cram schools and burgeoning private tutorial centres across all continents the world (the 'shadow education system'),³⁹ most noticeably East Asia,⁴⁰ are witness to the massive, worldwide influence of testing, assessment and credentials and the furtherance of education as a business.

A fourth way in which work and education are linked is through entrance to bureaucratic hierarchies, practices and mentalities.⁴¹ Both capitalism and socialism (in Weber's analysis) are characterized by increasing bureaucratization. As Harvey writes:

[p]roliferating divisions of labour within the economy are paralleled by proliferating bureaucratic divisions of regulatory and administrative authority not only within a typical state apparatus but also internally within many institutions, such as hospitals, universities and school systems.⁴²

³⁹ Cf. M. Bray, *The Shadow Education System: Private Tutoring and its Implications for Planners* (second edition), Paris, 2007; M. Bray, O. Kwo, *Regulating Private Tutoring for Public Good*, Hong Kong 2014.

⁴⁰ See Y. Zhao, *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon?*, op. cit., for a corrosive analysis of how this operates in China.

⁴¹ A startling example of this can be seen in China, see Y. Zhao, *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon?*, op. cit.

⁴² D. Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*, op. cit., pp. 121-122.

Indeed he notes that “these divisions of labour and of authority interlock and feed off each other, while still others acquire a hierarchical position vis-à-vis one another.”⁴³

Given that power (authority) is hierarchically distributed in bureaucracies, and that entrance to bureaucracies depends in large part on passing examinations and having recognized qualifications, if people are to gain power then they must possess the credentials that will enable them to ascend the rungs of power. The credentials that educational institutions provide buttress the economic and social organization of advanced capitalism by being a key means of ascending hierarchies (and, indeed, by providing ‘proof’ of specialist, expert knowledge).⁴⁴ Those without the necessary credentials do not begin to ascend the bureaucratic ladder and hence have little power to control their own futures. Little wonder that the scramble for qualifications increases; without them we become almost as nothing in many areas of the competitive jobs market. As Zhao remarks on China:

The Chinese do indeed value education, but out of necessity, not out of choice. Valuing education is simply a survival strategy. It evolved to cope with an authoritarian system that had instilled a very narrow definition of success: there is only one heaven [social mobility: a socially recognized profession that brings honor, fame, and respect’ (p. 122)] , and education is the only way to get there.⁴⁵

A fifth way in which work and education are linked is through the hidden curriculum of power and the induction of students into bureaucratic mentalities, conformity and the rise of unquestioning obedience. Beyond the naïve parallels between the hidden curriculum of education and work,⁴⁶ the internalization of the legitimacy of a bureaucratic mentality has affected – or infected – the minds of students. Zones of power and authority in education

⁴³ Ibidem, p. 122.

⁴⁴ Cf. ibidem.

⁴⁵ Y. Zhao, *Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon?*, op. cit., p. 125.

⁴⁶ For example, S. Bowles, H. Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America*, London 1976; J. Anyon, *Social class and the hidden curriculum of work*, “Journal of Education”, vol. 162, no. 1, 1980, pp. 67-92; J. Anyon, *Schools as agencies of social legitimation*, “International Journal of Political Education”, vol. 4, 1981, pp. 195-218.

institutions are characterized by the asymmetrical relations of power between managers, teachers and students. Existing power relations are hierarchical and become reified and fixed rather than rendered dialectical, and the teaching and learning of conformity becomes the norm,⁴⁷ be this to serve the apparently innocuous importance of the hidden curriculum of rules, routines, crowds, praise, delay, individual denial, and teacher power in the interests of promoting learning⁴⁸ or the potentially more conspiratorial view of the teaching of conformity to produce a compliant and obedient workforce, or, indeed populace.⁴⁹ Put simply, bosses learn to become bosses and subordinates learn the importance of subordination if they are to keep their job. The potential for the stifling of creativity and the development is strong.

Compliance and obedience exact their price, as schools become sites of contestation and challenge.⁵⁰ Student disaffection, boredom, indifference, lack of motivation, bad behaviour, poor attitudes and low performance are widely reported. Compared to the outside world, school is tame, its curricula are perceived as irrelevant and tedious, cramming minds with useless knowledge and facts; mass education becomes little more than crowd control in an endeavour to bring students up to given performance standards.

Outcomes-based education, coupled with endless testing and performance measurement, becomes a euphemism for the denial of the reflective, questioning intellect, for personal growth, and for all-round personal and societal development and for those aspects of education which are not measurable. In short, the narrowing of curricula does little service to the enabling, emancipatory power of education. Morrison⁵¹ provides a clear example

⁴⁷ See also K.R.B. Morrison, *Schooling for Conformity in Macau, Implementation and Rethinking of Educational Reforms in Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau*, Conference proceedings, Macau 2005.

⁴⁸ Cf. P.W. Jackson, *Life in Classrooms*, New York 1968.

⁴⁹ For example, M.L. Kohn, *Class and Conformity*, Chicago 1977; R. LeFay, *An ecological critique of education*, op. cit. Interestingly, Lefay's paper appeared in a journal on children's spirituality. See Y. Zhao, *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon?*, op. cit., chapter 6, for an analysis of how this operates in China.

⁵⁰ Cf. H. Giroux, *On Critical Pedagogy*, New York 2011.

⁵¹ Cf. K.R.B. Morrison, *Habermas and the School Curriculum: An Evaluation and Case Study*, Durham 1995.

of how curricula which have the potential for emancipation and truly innovative, creative, existential development of students and societies are hijacked by government into the service of economic development, preparation for work, and a compliant labour force. *Pace* Habermas,⁵² an 'awareness of what is missing' is, itself, missing.

Through these five channels – (a) the colonization of education by market forces, mentalities and practices; (b) the purposes of education being increasingly defined as preparation for work; (c) the rise of credentialism; (d) the bureaucratization of education; and (e) the narrowing of curricula and the hidden curriculum to create a disciplined workforce – the connection between education and work is tightened, reinterpreting and narrowing the nature of the nexus between education and its wider purposes of societal and personal emancipation as capital development and advancement.

2. The case of Macau

In my own context, Macau provides a neat illustration of the points raised above. (This is not intended to be representative or generalizable, merely illustrative.) Macau has five large, multi-disciplinary higher education (HE) institutions (two public and three private) and five smaller, largely mono-technic institutions (two public and three private).

In Macau's HE institutions, 772 students were studying for doctorates, 4,379 were studying Master's programs, 20,526 were studying undergraduate degrees, and the remainder studying for other kinds of diploma and certificate awards. Of these: 1,030 students (3.7%) were studying education courses; 2,988 (10.8%) were studying humanities and arts; 14,507 (52.2%) were studying social science and business (9,065 (32.6%) studying business alone); 1,197 (4.3%) were studying science; 822 (3.0%) studying architecture and engineering; 1,749 (6.3%) were studying health and social welfare; 5,472 (19.7%) were studying for service industries; and 12 (0.04%) were unspecified. Those studying for business, management, public administration and service

⁵² Cf. J. Habermas, *An awareness of what is missing*, op. cit.

occupations (15,802: 56.9%) outnumbered all the other areas combined.⁵³

The message is very clear: preparing for work is a major function of Macau's higher education. However, the world of work in Macau shows a preponderance of low-skill jobs. Macau's employment figures for 2014, of a total of 211,379 employees, are striking (Statistics and Census Service, 2014)⁵⁴ with regard to the areas of work done: 83.8% of the workforce were working in: hotels, restaurants and similar activities: 73,855 employees (35.0%); wholesale and retail trade: 45,664 employees (21.6%); gaming industry: 57,550 employees (27.2%). Figures for 2014 indicate that, of 67,400 employees surveyed, 32% of employees were in low grade jobs: hotel housekeeping staff: 4,612 (6.8%); hotel and restaurant waiters/waitresses: 13,119 employees (19.5%); retail salespersons: 17,164 (25.5%); security guards: 5,576 (8.3%); dealers: 25,727 (38.1%).

The figures for the third quarter of 2014 (the latest available at the time of writing) show a bottom-heavy workforce in terms of skill, with fewer than one quarter of the 391,200 employees in 'professional' employment: legislators, government officials, leaders of associations, directors and managers of companies: 28,000 (7.2%); professionals: 22,300 (5.7%); technicians and associate professionals: 44,900 (11.5%); clerks: 105,600 (27.0%); service and sales workers: 78,700 (20.1%); craftsmen and similar workers: 41,600 (10.6%); plant and machine operators, drivers and assemblers: 14,600 (3.7%); unskilled workers: 55,500 (14.2%).

Many graduates were in low-skill jobs, i.e. there is a poor match between some graduation majors and opportunities for employment in those majors and over-qualification for types of employment. In turn this suggests that a credentialist spiral obtains in Macau (and this reflects long-standing global trends).⁵⁵

⁵³ *Gabinete de Apoio ao Ensino Superior, Tertiary Education Office Yearbook 2012*, Macau, *Gabinete de Apoio ao Ensino Superior*, Government of Macau, Macau 2014.

⁵⁴ Statistics and Census Service, *Macau in Figures*, Macau, Statistics and Census Service, Government of Macau, <<http://www.dsec.gov.mo/default.aspx>> (accessed: 29.12.2014).

⁵⁵ For example, R. Dore, *The Diploma Disease*, London 1976; *Education versus Qualifications*, ed. J. Oxenham, London 1984.

This rehearses the points made by Braverman,⁵⁶ in which he argued that capital, particularly when coupled with Taylorism's 'scientific management', deliberately promoted the degradation of work into low-skill areas, deskilling the workforce:

the capitalist mode of production systematically destroys all-round skills where they exist, and brings into being skills and occupations that correspond to its needs.⁵⁷

Further, the Confucian Heritage Culture of obedience to authority, filial piety, and respect for seniority,⁵⁸ exerts a deadening effect on creativity in Macau students; they are experts in conformity and the hidden curriculum of unquestioning acceptance of what the teacher says.⁵⁹ This is coupled with the proliferation of private tutorial centres in Macau (over 200 in this tiny territory in 2010), with Bray and Kwo reporting that around 70 per cent of kindergarten and primary school students in Macau were receiving some form of private tutoring, 75 per cent in primary alone and, at secondary level, up to 67 per cent in Mathematics, with no government regulation.⁶⁰ Macau illustrates mainland China's and East Asia's preoccupation with testing, marks and credentials,⁶¹ with evidence that students in Macau have to take up to two tests each school day.⁶²

At the same time, Macau is experiencing demonstrations on the streets and in the media against its social situation: insufficient

⁵⁶ Cf. H. Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capitalism*, op. cit., p. 94.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, p. 57. Macau reflects an international situation, e.g.: <<http://www.oecd.org/dac/povertyreduction/43280339.pdf>; <http://www.oecd.org/employment/theoecdjobsforyouthreview.htm>>.

⁵⁸ Cf. W.O. Lee, *The cultural context for Chinese learners: Conceptions of learning in the Confucian tradition*, in: *The Chinese Learner: Cultural, Psychological and Contextual Influences*, eds. D. Watkins, J.B. Biggs, Hong Kong 1996, pp. 25-41.

⁵⁹ Cf. K.R.B. Morrison, *Causation in Educational Research*, Abingdon 2009, pp. 196-203.

⁶⁰ Cf. M. Bray, O. Kwo, *Regulating Private Tutoring for Public Good*, op. cit., pp. 15, 18.

⁶¹ For the example of mainland China, see Y. Zhao, *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon?*, op. cit.

⁶² Cf. K.R.B. Morrison, J.F.H. Tang, *Testing to destruction: A problem in a small state*, "Assessment in Education", vol. 9, no. 3, p. 297.

housing and exorbitant rental prices; food banks for the poor; gross income inequality; narrow career opportunities and limited economic diversification; timid political development and disconnected government; enduring poverty and social exclusion; imperceptible sustainable development; diminishing quality of life; dwindling consumer confidence and customer satisfaction; unremitting inflation; poor social services and welfare; declining small and medium-sized enterprises; social unrest and youth disaffection; environmental degradation, territory-wide pollution and urban squalor; dire public transport, taxi services and traffic management. Linking education and work so strongly, coupled with a Confucian Heritage Culture of conformity, appears not to be improving the quality of life in Macau. Thus interpreted, education in Macau seems to be unaware of what it is missing.

3. “An Awareness of What Is Missing”

Whilst nobody would seriously argue that education should not prepare students for employment, it must not stop there. Work is a necessary but insufficient component of education and does not warrant the prominence currently accorded to it. On its own it is an impoverished view of education.

How can the relationship between education and work be improved? How to quench the fire of employment-driven education for capital accumulation? How can we recover the wider purposes of education? How can system and lifeworld be reconnected and recoupled, breaking away from education simply to service advanced capitalism and capital accumulation? How can the colonization of the lifeworld by system imperatives of labour be reversed? How can the ethical and moral dimensions of education be restored? How can the controlling rationalization of education to becoming a bureaucratic labour service industry be reduced? How can the marketization or quasi-marketization of education be stilled? How to reclaim education for education’s sake?

Taking the lead from Habermas,⁶³ it is essential that education restores the balance between a narrow instrumentalism – purposive-rational, strategic, perlocutionary action – and communica-

⁶³ J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two: Lifeworld and System*, op. cit.

tive, open-ended, illocutionary action. The task of communicative action is to reduce the intrusion of steering media into the lifeworld and to recouple lifeworld and system.⁶⁴ Habermas's two-volume *The Theory of Communicative Action*⁶⁵ argues for communicative action: "action oriented to mutual understanding"⁶⁶ to restore the lifeworld of citizens from the ravages of instrumental reason.

Communicative action's rescue is based upon the speech act obligations of criticizable validity claims, mutual deliberation and argumentation, with locutionary aspects premised on 'truth', illocutionary aspects of rightness or legitimacy, and expressive aspects of authenticity or sincerity.⁶⁷ Truth, rightness, sincerity, legitimacy, sincerity and authenticity contribute to the achievement and sustenance of a cooperative consensus which rests on the intersubjective recognition of participants' rights to enter into a conversation in which "only the unforced force of the better argument comes into play,"⁶⁸ adhering to the "unconstrained, consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech"⁶⁹ and freedom to: modify a given conceptual framework; check questionable claims; reflect on the nature of knowledge; assess justifications; alter norms; evaluate explanations; participate in a discussion as an equal'. This, argues Habermas, breaks the

iron cage' of Weber's instrumental rationality and bureaucratization of society. In communicative action a 'moment of unconditionality exists,⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Cf. *ibidem*.

⁶⁵ J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, op. cit.; *idem*, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two: Lifeworld and System*, op. cit.

⁶⁶ J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, op. cit., p. 310.

⁶⁷ Cf. J. Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. T. McCarthy, London 1979, p. 28; *idem*, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two: Lifeworld and System*, op. cit., p. 26.

⁶⁸ J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, op. cit., p. 130.

⁶⁹ J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, op. cit., p. 110.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 322.

in contrast to the instrumental rationality which is premised on realizing sectoral interests⁷¹ and suppressing “generalizable interests.”⁷²

Whether communicative action alone really has the power to upset the day-to-day lived realities of oppression, power differentials and constraints that cannot be resolved by the force of argument or the ability to understand others’ perspectives is questionable.⁷³ As Boudon remarks: Habermas’s appeal to communication

reminds me of the story of the expert in operational research who, when asked the best way to get an elephant on to a boat, started from the assumption that the weight of the elephant was negligible.⁷⁴

Habermas’ communicative action argues for the reduction of technicist, over-controlling bureaucratization and the increase in communication and discursive, ideology critical interrogation of educational, curricular, pedagogic and evaluation practices, by, for example: (1) developing students’ empowerment, freedoms, autonomy, voice and cultural power with and through student-centred learning; (2) ensuring that education is its own end rather than, instrumentally, serving other ends; (3) ensuring that education promotes equality, equal opportunities and democracy; (5) broadening the scope of education to embrace aesthetic and expressive education and non-instrumental forms of rationality; (6) critically evaluating cultural and environmental contexts in which personal and community cultural biographies are embedded; (7) developing citizenship in participatory democracies; (8) undertaking political education and the study of politically sensitive issues. The political sensitivity of this enterprise is vast, for it engages the questioning of legitimacy of curricular and pedagogical decision-making, and constitutes a challenge to those definitions of what education is for, other than in the service

⁷¹ Cf. J. Habermas, *A reply to my critics*, in: *Habermas: Critical Debates*, eds. J.B. Thompson, D. Held, London 1982, pp. 219-283.

⁷² J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. T. McCarthy, London 1976.

⁷³ Cf. R. Boudon, *The Analysis of Ideology*, trans. M. Slater, Oxford 1989.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 194.

of work and capital. Education is more than the development of producers, consumers and labourers. As De Graaf et al. suggest:

Human beings are more than consumers, more than stomachs craving to be filled... We are members of families and communities, moral beings with interest in fairness and justice, living organisms dependent on a healthy and beautiful environment. We are parents and children.⁷⁵

Further still, education should concern itself with the less measurable, more intangible aspects of personal and societal development, including, but not limited to emotional, aesthetic, expressive, moral, ethical, social and spiritual intelligence, e.g. those aspects of education which may not be measurable in performance-based, outcomes-based education. Here, by way of illustration, I turn to two sources: Sertillanges⁷⁶ and the later Habermas.⁷⁷ Sertillanges (1998) is concerned to promote the 'intellectual life' which includes, *inter alia*, several features:

- Resolve, a sense of vocation, response and relative singularity of purpose, and the importance of freedom to think and reflect;
- Connection with, and yet detachment from, one's society, and cooperation with one's fellows;
- The significance of contemplation, solitude, silence and reflection: 'all pay tribute to loneliness, to the life of silence, to the night... Solitude is the homeland of the strong';⁷⁸
- The importance of conscience;
- Self-discipline and the austere obligation of deep study, avoiding 'the danger of being easily satisfied';⁷⁹

⁷⁵ J. De Graaf, D. Wann, T.H. Naylor, *Affluenza: The All-consuming Epidemic*, San Francisco 2002, p. 50.

⁷⁶ Cf. A.G. Sertillanges, *The Intellectual Life: Its Spirit, Conditions, Methods*, Washington 1998.

⁷⁷ Cf. J. Habermas, *A reply*, op. cit.; idem, *An awareness of what is missing*, op. cit.

⁷⁸ Cf. A.G. Sertillanges, *The Intellectual Life: Its Spirit, Conditions, Methods*, op. cit., pp. 48, 51.

⁷⁹ Cf. ibidem, p. 119.

- The significance of learning, self-examination and the cultivation of the inner life, together with a renunciation of the self and the cultivation of a sense of selflessness;
- A recognition of the limits of reason and an awareness of our own pretensions and frailties;
- A breadth of outlook: “a ‘dry fruit’ stands for one who knows nothing; but also for one whose mind is shrunken and shriveled because he [*sic*] has prematurely confined himself to the cultivation of one department of study.”⁸⁰
- Modesty and humility coupled with strength of belief.

His view is not for the faint-hearted, but it relegates the imperatives of labour to a much lowlier position in education than it currently enjoys. Sertillanges, a Dominican priest, indicates how education is much more than simply preparing for work; it is to develop people *qua* humans, not only cognitively and in terms of what they know, but in terms of being and non-cognitive dimensions.⁸¹ Not to address this is to render key purposes of education as missing.

Habermas’s *An Awareness of What Is Missing*⁸² marks an important milestone in his recognition of key aspects of life that are not simply secular.⁸³ The volume, based on the 2007 podium discussion between Habermas and representatives of the Jesuit School for Philosophy in Munich, indicates some softening of his earlier antagonism towards religion and his erstwhile view that

[r]eligion is in danger of blocking precisely this communicative action because it does not leave the religious participants in discourse free to enter the presuppositionless space of rational communication, but instead equips them with clear directives concerning the goal of the discourse.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Ibidem, p. 102.

⁸¹ See Y. Zhao, *Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon?*, op. cit., pp. 273 ff. for a critique of Chinese education in this respect.

⁸² J. Habermas, *An awareness of what is missing*, op. cit.

⁸³ See also J. Habermas, *Faith and knowledge*, in: idem, *The Future of Human Nature*, trans. W. Rehg, M. Pensky, H. Beister, Cambridge 2003, pp. 101-115.

⁸⁴ M. Reder, J. Schmidt, *Habermas and religion*, in: *An Awareness of What Is Missing*, op. cit., pp. 1-14.

Habermas's comments⁸⁵ constitute a clearer demarcation of boundary lines between philosophy and religion.

Reder and Schmidt (2010) report Habermas's view that 'the secularization hypothesis has now lost its explanatory power and that religion and the secular world always stand in a reciprocal relation', that religion is an important moral source, and that

religious utterances take on a positive function, for instance in virtue of their meaning-endowing potential, for deliberative democracy as part of the plurality of opinions within society.⁸⁶

Indeed Habermas argues that we cannot dispense with religion convictions if the potential for communicative action is to be realized, and that one should not "treat religious expressions as simply irrational."⁸⁷ (Habermas notes, however, that

the religious side must accept the authority of 'natural' reason as the fallible results of the institutionalized sciences and the basic principles of universalistic egalitarianism in law and morality⁸⁸,

and that „[faith remains opaque for knowledge in a way which may neither be denied nor simply accepted“).⁸⁹

Brieskorn argues that Habermas's view of 'what is missing' concerns reason, 'practical reason'.⁹⁰ and the recognition that 'reason has a social concern'.⁹¹ Brieskorn suggests that reason develops in four dimensions: transcendence, 'orientation to the world', history and 'discursive rationality'⁹² What is missing, he avers, are: (religious) rites; 'solidarity and motivation to show solidarity';⁹³ 'whether the political community is aware of

⁸⁵ Cf. J. Habermas, *A reply*, op. cit.; idem, *An awareness of what is missing*, op. cit.

⁸⁶ M. Reder, J. Schmidt, *Habermas and religion*, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

⁸⁷ J. Habermas, *An awareness of what is missing*, op. cit., p. 22.

⁸⁸ Ibidem, p. 16.

⁸⁹ Ibidem, p. 18.

⁹⁰ N. Brieskorn, *On the attempt to recall a relationship*, in: *An Awareness of What Is Missing*, op. cit., p. 26.

⁹¹ Ibidem, p. 24.

⁹² Ibidem, p. 27.

⁹³ Ibidem, p. 29.

being founded on secure and resolute convictions concerning its legitimacy’;⁹⁴ and ‘religiously justified stances... in the public sphere’.⁹⁵ Indeed Habermas himself argues that [r]eligious consciousness... preserves an essential connection to the ongoing practice of life within a community’⁹⁶, arguing, perhaps contentiously, that the ‘religious communities and Churches can play an active role in the political arena’,⁹⁷ though he rejects a simplistic functionalist conception of religion here and notes that religions “are *not* reducible to ‘ethical’ worldviews”⁹⁸ (italics in the original).

In the closing pages of his ‘reply’ at the 2007 podium discussion, Habermas, echoing Sertillanges’s view of the importance of selflessness and connection with, and yet detachment from, one’s society, comments on the view that the first biblical commandment enables “human beings to transcend everything in the world” and that

the worship of the one God liberates beings from all possible idols and earthly powers... We can only ‘master’ a language of whose *logos* we heed; at the same time this *logos* liberates us from the subjection to the immediacy of events and occurrences in the world, because we gain intentional distance from the world as a whole through intersubjective communication about something in the world.⁹⁹

Habermas’s comment here, *mutatis mutandis*, like Sertillanges, constitutes an appeal to contemplation and reflection and the promise of reconnecting lifeworld and system that such contemplation brings. This, too, reworks the significance of ‘self-communication’ to which Castells¹⁰⁰ refers in his characterization of the contemporary communication-rich world, and communicative action reconnects the individual with himself/herself in a world in which communication, ironically, has sundered that connection,

⁹⁴ Ibidem, p. 30.

⁹⁵ Ibidem, p. 31.

⁹⁶ J. Habermas, *A reply*, op. cit., p. 75.

⁹⁷ Ibidem, p. 76.

⁹⁸ Ibidem, p. 79.

⁹⁹ Ibidem, pp. 82-83.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. M. Castells, *Communication Power*, op. cit.

buttressed up by education systems which say little about values and ethics but a lot about jobs.

Reconnecting the individual and the social, moral, ethical and spiritual worlds also means an inner, internal synthesis of the elements of communicative action within the person, and an internal debate and reflection on ethics, values and spirituality. For religious communities it speaks to the transcendent, to immanence. This takes us far away from those views of education as simply preparation for work which is weighed by its use value rather than its meaning, being and significance. In this revised view of education, system and lifeworld coalesce within the reflective individual; the formless void of an education emptied by the demands of capital and labour, with darkness over the surface of the deep, is replaced by reflection and a re-engagement with the transcendent, the immanent, and the resurgence of the spirit moving over the surface of the waters.

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