One thing is clear; the Middle Ages could not live on Catholicism, nor could the ancient world on politics. On the contrary, it is the manner in which they gained their livelihood which explains why in one case politics, in the other case Catholicism, played the chief part.

—Marx

Abstractions reflect nature more deeply, truly and completely.

—Lenin

One of the signs of the collapse of contemporary U.S. pedagogy is the interpretation the majority of Americans make of the event that is now marked by the cultural sign “9/11.” To them, the event was (and remains) proof that “‘they’ hate ‘us.’” The only way, in other words, most Americans brought up in the U.S. educational system could make sense of the event was affective. Any attempt to introduce even a mildly analytical “why” (“Why do you think ‘they’ hate Americans?”) was (and is) taken as the height of emotional crudeness and intellectual vulgarity, if not outright anti-Americanism.

Having reduced the event to a “trauma,” the reaction to the trauma was (and remains) also traumatic. In the days following the event, waves of violence by ordinary people, the FBI, the police, the INS, the local militia, and neighborhood vigilantes were unleashed toward the “other” and those who had the “same” look as the other. With a sentimental and equally violent patriotism, the U.S. flag was (and is) used to more decisively sort the world out into lovers and haters of “our way of life.” U.S. pedagogy has so paralyzed people’s critique-al consciousness, most are now helpless witnesses to the emergence of a national
security state ("The Patriot Act") and the preemptive class aggressions of the empire.

The teach-ins and forums that were held about the event were only slightly more layered expressions of the affective. Most were sessions in talking trauma which, following the trauma theory now popular in many cultural circles, dissolved history into unrepresentable affect (see Felman; Lyotard, Difference; LaCapra; Caruth). The teach-ins became occasions for displacing an analytical grasping of history by an ecumenical sentimentality for the suffering.

Michael Bérubé’s essay in the Chronicle of Higher Education is exemplary of the lessons in empathy to avoid the analytical. It is rhetorically a masterful lesson in the erasure of all traces of thinking about the event in part because it preemptively announces itself as an intervention in ignorance. After describing how he had shelved the course assignments in his classes to devote “most of the rest of the week” to a discussion of students’ “reactions to the attack,” he narrates a range of readings of the event and concludes that the “most troubling” analyses of the event were from the political left, some of which were coming uncomfortably close to justifying the indiscriminate slaughter of innocents. Many students immediately connected the attack to various American operations in the Middle East, and I wanted them to be very careful about how they made those connections. Of course, I said, of course the attacks must be placed in the broader context of the history of U.S. foreign policy in Asia and the Middle East. But any analysis that did not start from a position of solidarity with, and compassion for, the victims, their families, and the extraordinary rescue workers in New York and Washington was an analysis not worth time and attention.

What Bérubé’s teaching seeks is moral clarity, which has become the conservative touchstone in reading the event, not analytical critique (see Bennett). Bérubé moves quickly to block by “clarification” any attempt at such a critique by saturating the session with details (what he calls “background information”): “Very well, some students replied, but what does it mean to ‘place the attacks in the broader context of U.S. foreign policy’? Here, not surprisingly, what my students wanted and needed most was basic background information.”

What follows, in the name of curing ignorance, are stories about U.S. foreign policy but no conceptual analysis:
Was it true, they asked, that the CIA once financed and trained bin Laden? Well, yes, I said, but at the time, in the 1980s, we financed just about anyone who showed up and offered to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan. No, we didn’t have the same kind of relationship to bin Laden that we had to Noriega or Pinochet or the Shah or Somoza or any of the other dictators we’d propped up in the course of waging the cold war.

The “story” in contemporary pedagogy (which has opportunistically concluded that knowledge is a story and all concepts are tropes) performs an essential ideological task: it offers a non-explanatory explanation and thus constructs an “enlightened false consciousness” in the classroom (see Sloterdijk 5–6). Teaching by stories produces knowingness, not knowledge, and consequently cultivates a savvy cynicism about ideas, analysis, and explanation. It rejects causal explanation (in fact, it dismisses the very idea of “cause-effect”) and puts in its place vaguely plotted details that hint at moving but have no analytical yield: the pleasures of stories replace the cognitive.

This is important because no account of the event can forget the CIA. However, most accounts of the event evoke the CIA to obscure its role by telling CIA stories of high intrigue in exotic lands and thus divert attention from the other CIA whose role is crucial in understanding the “event.” The CIA, which is openly discussed and critiqued to obtain radical credentials for the storyteller, is, as Bérubé’s tale demonstrates, a political agency of the U.S. government. The other CIA—the one that is covered up by these narrative details—is only officially a political agency of the State. In practice, it is the gendarme of American capitalism: it is an economic not a political outfit.

Bérubé’s lesson obscures this CIA which is an extension of U.S. corporations and whose task is to wage a clandestine class war against the working people of the world to keep the world safe for U.S. investment. There is no hint in his teaching of the event that the CIA’s actions might be symptoms of the systematic aggression of market forces against the workers and that the event might be an outcome of market forces. In his teaching, the CIA becomes a story machine producing absorbing stories that circle around personalities, places, and actions but lead nowhere. They build an illusion of knowing. Analysis of the economic role of the CIA (which produces material knowledge of global relations) is obstructed by details that have no analytical effect. Why, for instance, did the CIA fight to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan? Bérubé’s “waging the cold war” seems to imply that the dynamic of the conflict is “ideol-
ogy.” The U.S. and the Soviets simply had two different “political” systems and cultures. Thus, in Bérubé’s version of history, it is natural that the CIA wanted to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan and increase the U.S.’s sphere of political and cultural power in the region. The conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States is, in other words, a clash of ideas.

Underlining his pedagogy is, in other words, a view of history as an expansionism of “power” (see Hardt and Negri) and as conflicts of “ideologies” (see Fukuyama). It is based on the notion that “discourse” and “ideas” shape the world since, ultimately, history itself is the discursive journey of the Soul toward a cultural and spiritual resolution of material contradictions. This theory mystifies history by displacing “class” (labor) with “ideas” and “discourse,” and it consequently produces world history as a “clash of civilizations” that rewrites the world in the interest of the Euroamerican capitalism (see Huntington). According to the clash theory (which is the most popular interpretive axis of 9/11), people do what they do because of their “culture” not because they exploit the labor of others (and live in comfort), or because their labor is exploited by others (and therefore they live in abject poverty). The event, in other words, is an instance of the clash of civilizations: culture (“values,” “language,” “religion,” the “affective”) did it. “They” hate “our” way of life (“Their ‘values’ clash with our ‘values’”). Since “values” are transhistorical, the clash is spiritual, not material. But culture, didn’t do it. Contrary to contemporary dogma (see Hall, “Centrality”), culture is not autonomous; it is the bearer of economic interests. Cultural values are, to be clear, inversive: they are a spiritualization of material interests. Culture cannot solve the contradictions that develop at the point of production; it merely suspends them. Material contradictions can be solved only materially—namely, by the class struggles that would end the global regime of wage labor. The event is an unfolding of a material contradiction not a clash of civilizations. If teaching the event does not at least raise the possibility of a class understanding of it, the teaching is not pedagogy; it is ideology (as I outline it later in this essay).

To be more precise, the CIA fought the Soviets (and then the Taliban) because U.S. capitalism needs to turn Afghanistan into a “new silk road.” The conquest of Afghanistan, in other words, was planned long before the event, and its goal was neither liberation of the Afghani people nor what the CIA calls “democratization.” It was simply aimed at turning the country into a huge pipeline station. In his testimony before the “House Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on Asia and the
Pacific” on February 12, 1998 (three years before “9/11”), John J. Maresca, the Vice President for International Relations of Unocal Corporation, stated that

The Caspian region contains tremendous untapped hydrocarbon reserves, much of them located in the Caspian Sea basin itself. Proven natural gas reserves within Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan equal more than 236 trillion cubic feet. The region’s total oil reserves may reach more than 60 billion barrels of oil—enough to service Europe’s oil needs for 11 years. Some estimates are as high as 200 billion barrels. In 1995, the region was producing only 870,000 barrels per day (44 million tons per year [Mt/y]). (Monthly Review, Dec. 2001)

The problem for U.S. capital was how to get the energy to the market. The safest and most profitable way to get the energy to the West was, Maresca testified, by building “A commercial corridor, a ‘new’ Silk Road” through Afghanistan. Developing “cost-effective, profitable and efficient export routes for Central Asia,” according to Maresca, is the point of converging “U.S. commercial interests and U.S. foreign policy”: Afghanistan had to be liberated to build the new silk road not because of a “clash of civilizations.”

A pedagogy that brings up the event in the classroom has a responsibility at least to raise these issues: to limit “knowledge” to “background information” and then substitute CIA stories for conceptual analysis of material causes is not curing ignorance but legitimating it. Attributing the causes of the event to culture, therefore, is to obscure the world class relations and the fact that their “hatred” is not the effect of an immanent evil in their religion or language or values but the brutal exploitation of capital that has torn apart “their” way of life to build new silk roads all over “their” world. The silk road always and ultimately leads to “events.” To blame other cultures, as Bérubé does when he refers to “searing images of cheering Palestinian children,” is to let capitalism off the hook. It is a practice that produces a “false consciousness” in students so that they make sense of the world through spiritualistic “values” that marginalize the actual struggles over the surplus labor of the “other”—which is what makes their own life comfortable. This is not curing ignorance; it is the corporate pedagogy of a flag-waving nationalism.

The pedagogy of affect piles up details and warns students against attempting to relate them structurally because any structural analysis will be a causal explanation, and all causal explanations, students are told, are reductive. Teaching thus becomes a pursuit of floating details—a version
of games in popular culture. Students "seem" to know but have no knowledge. This is exactly the kind of education that capital requires for its "new" workforce: workers who are educated but nonthinking; skilled at detailed jobs but unable to grasp the totality of the system—energetic localists, ignorant globalists.

This pedagogy provides instruction not in knowledge but in savviness—a knowing that knows what it knows is an illusion but is undeluded about that illusion; it integrates the illusion, and thus makes itself immune to critique. Savviness is "enlightened false consciousness"—a consciousness that knows it is false but its "falseness is already reflexively buffered" (see Sloterdijk 5). The effect of this reflexive falseness is that "one knows the falsehood very well, one is well aware of the particular interest hidden behind an ideological universality, but one still does not renounce it" (Žižek, Sublime 29).

What a pedagogy of savviness teaches is knowing with a wink. In fact, the "wink" places such knowledge on the borders of what Sloterdijk calls "kynicism" (217–18)—absorbing the falseness by an ironic, tongue-in-cheek pedagogy that completely abolishes the conceptual for the pleasures of the story. The story is represented as liberating the concrete of daily life from the conceptual totalitarianism of abstractions. (I will use "totalitarian" and "totalitarianism" in their sanctioned "liberal" senses because I do not have the space for a critique of liberal vocabularies and their concealed economic assumptions.) "Totalitarian" and its derivations, however, have always been used by liberals to guarantee "liberal-democratic hegemony, dismissing the leftist critique of liberal democracy as the obverse, the "twin" of the Right Fascist dictatorship" (see Žižek, Did). Story-pedagogy consequently becomes lessons in politics as desire, affect, and unsurpassable experience, as in the writings of Marjorie Garber, Elaine Showalter ("Professor"), Garcia Nestor, and Eve Sedgwick.

These pedagogues theorize desire, the affective, trauma, feelings, and experience, which are all effects of class relations, as spontaneous reality and deploy them in teaching to outlaw lessons in conceptual analysis of the social totality—which is aimed at producing class consciousness in the student (the future worker). The classroom is then constituted as the scene of desire where the student is interpellated as the subject of his or her affects which, in their assumed inimitability, ascribe to him an imaginary, matchless individuality. The un-said exceptionality of affect in the classroom of desire becomes an ideological alibi for the negation of collectivity grounded in objective class interests, and the student is taught to "wage a war on totality" by activating "the differ-
ences,” and in “the honor of the name” identify with himself as an unsurpassable singularity that exceeds all representations (Lyotard, *Postmodern 82*). The pedagogy of totality is the negation of the negation.

Bérubé’s stories of a political CIA are narratives of capitalist desire aimed at fragmenting the internationalism of class connectedness among working people by dehistoricizing and localizing affects (suffering of the same and cheering of the other). However, the event has a history and, as an objective materiality, cannot be understood without placing it in the world-historical class struggles. But in the classroom of “enlightened false consciousness” constituted by desire, class has no place. Any explanations of the event as a moment in the unfolding of international class struggles, as a moment in which “two great classes” (the rich and the poor) are finally “directly facing each other,” is suspended in silence (Marx and Engels, *Manifesto 41*).

To put class back into teaching of the event is to move beyond dissipating history through “trauma” and anecdotes of affect and thus to put an end to the teaching of savviness, which masquerades as a curing of ignorance. The task of the pedagogy of totality is to teach the abstract relations that structure the concrete material reality and not be distracted by the details of appearance because “abstractions reflect nature more deeply, truly and completely” and bring the student closer to grasping social totality: “the relations of production in their totality” (Marx, *Wage-Labour 29*), which is constituted by class antagonism, and therefore its unity is a “unity of opposites” (Lenin, “On” 358). The hostility to conceptual analysis and particularly to class critique in contemporary pedagogy goes well beyond the teach-ins on the event. It is the fundamental dogma of “radical” bourgeois pedagogy. Henry Giroux, for example, wipes out class from pedagogy on the grounds that class is part of what he calls “totalizing” politics (*Impure 25–26*). To be so totally opposed to totalizing is, of course, itself a totalization. But totalizing in opposing totalization does not seem to bother Giroux and other anti-totalizing pedagogues because the issue, ultimately, is really not epistemological (“totalizing”) but economic (class). In contemporary pedagogy, “totalizing” is an epistemological cover for the class cleansing of pedagogy.

The pedagogy of affect is always and ultimately a ruse for pragmatism, which is, as the writings of Richard Rorty demonstrate, an apologetics for what actually “is”—the dominant system of wage labor (see *Achieving*). Pragmatism deploys the affective to naturalize the existing social relations of property by teaching affect as the only site in which the “hopes and aspirations” of the subject of learning can be fulfilled
(Brooks): a site in which class is "dead" (Pakluski and Waters), and desire is sovereign (Gallop, "Teacher's"). Sovereignty, however, is not the sovereignty of the individual of affect but of consumption, which is eroticized to interpellate him or her as the individual of affect. "Ideologically, we see the same contradiction in the fact that the bourgeoisie endowed the individual with an unprecedented importance, but at the same time that same individuality was annihilated by the economic conditions to which it was subjected, by the reification created by commodity production" (Lukacs, History 62).

**Transformative Pedagogy**

Pedagogy is most effective when its lessons are situated in the conceptual analysis of objective social totality and grounded in historical materialist critique. Totalization is essential to transformative pedagogy because it is through totalization that the student—the future worker—is enabled to "see society from the center, as a coherent whole" and therefore "act in such a way as to change reality" (Lukacs, History 69). Changing reality in a sustained way, requires knowing it historically and objectively—that is, conceptually as a totality in structure—and not simply reacting to it as a galaxy of signifiers (as textualists have done), as the working of power in networks of discourses (Foucault), or as a spontaneous reality that is available to us in its full immediacy (as activists have done with eclecticism and sentimentality). Pedagogy, in other words, is always partisan, and the only question is whose side (in the great class struggles) it takes and why: "Who does not know that talk about this or that institution being non-partisan is generally nothing but the humbug of the ruling classes, who want to gloss over the fact that existing institutions are already imbued, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, with a very definite political spirit?" (Lenin, "Tasks").

Criticism of totality as a closural space that excludes difference and thus leads to totalitarianism is based on an antimaterialist reading of difference as "contingency" (Rorty 3–69); as "hybridity" (Bhabha); as "differance"—the play of "traces" in the differing and deferral of the sign (Derrida, "Differance"); or the performativity of identity (Butler, Bodies). These and other versions of difference in contemporary pedagogy are based on cultural heterogeneities that deflect the difference that makes all the differences: the social division of labor under capitalism. The pedagogy of totality writes the foundational difference of class (which explains all these differences) back into teaching and foregrounds it not as aleatory signs (which is the epistemology of all these differences)
but as a historical necessity for capital, which divides people with rigid
clearly in the regime of wage labor (Marx and Engels, Manifesto 40–60).
Social totality, as I have suggested, is a totality with a materialist (class)
difference. It is resistance against the ferocity of "contingency,"
"performativity," "hybridity," and "differance"—all of which have re-
written the world in cynicism, in pathos, and ironically but always in the
interest of the transnational bourgeoisie.

Objective knowledge of the world and thus of the social totality is not
a product of individual consciousness (Popper) or the outcome of codes
of the "culture of science" (Kuhn). Nor is it simply a semiotic effect
(Latour). Objective knowledge of the world is a knowledge that is
produced as people collectively produce their material life:

The fact is, therefore, that definite individuals who are productively
active in a definite way enter into these definite social and political
relations. . . . The social structure and the state are continually evolving
out of the life-process of definite individuals, however, of these individu-
als, not as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination, but
as they actually are, i. e. as they act, produce materially, and hence as they
work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions
independent of their will. (Marx and Engels, German 35–36)

The focus of transformative pedagogy is on these material relations of
difference that are the basis of all social relations and practices. Without
teaching these grounding material relations that condition all
knowledges—from Nanosciences to Anthropology—pedagogy becomes
the art of mystification in the interest of the class that benefits from
keeping these foundational relations and therefore the causes of social
inequalities in the dark (especially by using an epistemological argument
against the foundational). Since the production of material life involves
acting on the object of labor by the means of labor, relations of production
are primarily relations to the means and object of labor—they are
relations to the means of production. Social relations of production
indicate who controls the means of production, which is another way of
saying they are relations of property (class). Social life, itself, takes
opposing forms depending on whether the means of production are
owned collectively by the producers or privately by individuals who
appropriate the products of the producers. Pedagogy acts within these
relations and, therefore, must situate its teaching within them and also
self-reflexively include the conditions of its own production in its
lessons.
Under wage labor, the "appearance" of the relations of production differs from their "essence," since their appearance in the market is an inversion of what they actually are at the point of production. The inequality at the point of production—between those who have to sell their labor power for their subsistence and those who purchase it for profit—is characterized in the market as equality and freedom, and the exchange of wages for labor power is inverted and represented as a fair trade (Marx, *Capital I*, 280). The task of a pedagogy of totality is not to mistake the "appearance" for the "essence" and to foreground the material difference: "All science would be superfluous if the form of appearance of things directly coincided with their essence" (3, 956). Transformative teaching is the science of the material difference. It points out to the student why in daily life, ideology sutures difference in order to persuade the subject of labor that the appearance is the essence and to textualize the "essence" as a species of "appearance." Transformative pedagogy breaks through this false consciousness with a conceptual analysis that produces knowledge of the essence through a class critique of appearance.

Bourgeois pedagogy reifies market representations and by dismissing "essence" as a foundationalist metaphysics (see Fairlamb) valorizes "appearance," as in Nietzschean pedagogy in which "appearance" is read as sense-able and equated with spontaneous reality (263–67). In his annotations of this Nietzschean interpretation, Derrida foregrounds the sense-able as the "unfulfillable alphabet"—a non-phonetic alphabet—that asserts its own thickness against phono-centrism (conceptuality), which translates the sense-able into the intelligible through the loss of its singularity (difference) (*Of* 91). The pedagogy of appearance is now popularized by such teachers as Geoffrey Bennington (11–116), who deploy the sense-able to construct a classroom without concepts in which teaching is sense-ing ("feeling" as "theory"/"theory" as "feeling"). In spite of the formal differences between textualist and activist pedagogy, "appearance" (as Ira Shor's appropriation of Freire in "Education is Politics: Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy" shows) is also the mainstay of the activist classroom in which the student's "experience" is taken to be identical with spontaneous reality. But perhaps the most lucid example of deletion of the Marxist's notion of essence in pedagogy is Fredric Jameson's theory of appearance as the "new" postcontemporary "reality." He represents the postmodern as an effect of a cultural revolution, one of whose main legacies is the rearticulation of social reality as the new "depthless" reality (*Postmodernism* 6). Jameson reads the new literalism
as simply a "new kind of superficiality" (9). For him it is not a symptom of the alienation of appearance from essence under wage labor. Instead, he treats it as a purely formal and epistemic matter and, in the name of the "post" ("differences between the shoes of Van Gogh and Andy Warhol," 9), conceals estranged labor in the new flatness and relocates pedagogy in the pleasures of the details of textures (38-45). The pedagogy of totality puts the relations of labor and capital back into teaching and traces appearance in the market to essence at the point of production (see Lukacs, "Frantz"). Elimination of "depth" allows the pedagogue to represent the inverted reality of a world turned upside down by the carnage of capital as the cutting-edge reality of the postcontemporary. The "post" as always masks the violence of wage labor by the aura of the "new" which induces "shock and awe" in the student and reduces him or her to an affective passivity.

The pedagogy of appearance focuses on cultural representation and the role of representation in constructing the represented. By centering teaching in the machinery of "representation," it obliterates the objective. Reducing pedagogy to lessons in cultural semiotics, it makes "experience" of the pleasures of "depthless" surfaces the measure of reality and thus obscures the social relations of production that are the material conditions of that experience. However, "This 'lived' experience is not a given, given by a pure 'reality,' but the spontaneous 'lived experience' of ideology in its peculiar relationship to the real" (Althusser 223).

The ideological value of the concept of "experience" in de-conceptualizing pedagogy will perhaps become more clear in examining the way bourgeois radical pedagogues, such as Giroux, deploy experience as an instance of spontaneity to eviscerate class as an explanatory concept by which the social relations of property are critiqued. In his *Impure Acts*—a book devoted to marginalizing explanatory concepts and popularizing "hybrids" and that, in effect, justifies political opportunism in pedagogy—Giroux repeats the claims of such other cultural phenomenologists as Stuart Hall, Judith Butler, and Robin Kelley that "class" is "lived through race" (28). Class, in other words, is an affect. He represents this affective view of class as epistemological resistance against class which, he claims, is a universal category that takes the "difference" of race out of class. As I have already argued, epistemology is used in mainstream pedagogy as a cover for a reactionary class politics that does several things, as Giroux demonstrates. First, it segregates the "black" proletariat from the "white" proletariat and isolates both from other "racial" proletariats. In doing so, Giroux’s pedagogy carries out the political agenda of
capital—to pit one segment of the proletariat against the other and to turn the unity of the working class into contesting (race) “differences.” Second, it rewrites the system of wage labor itself into a hybrid. Giroux’s experience-ism obscures the systematicity of wage labor and argues that there is no capitalism operating with a single logic of exploitation. Instead, there are many, aleatory, ad hoc, local arrangements between employees and employers depending on the color of the worker not the laws of motion of capital. Third, it converts capitalism from an economic system based on the “exploitation” of humans by humans (wage labor)—through the ownership of the means of production—into an institution of cultural “oppression” based on “power.” Fourth, since class is lived through race, it is not an objective fact (the relation of the worker to ownership of the means of production) but a subjective experience. The experience of (“living”) class through race, like all experiences, is contingent, aleatory, and indeterminate. Class (lived through the experience of race) is thus reconstituted as contingent—an accident not a necessity of wage labor. Fifth, since capitalism is not a system but a series of ad hoc arrangements of exchange with various workers of diverse colors, it does not produce an objective binary class system but only cultural differences. One cannot, therefore, obtain objective knowledge of capitalism. There are, in short, no laws of motion of capital; there are only “experiences” of work influenced by one’s color. Consequently, to say—as I have said—that capitalism is a regime of exploitation is simply a totalitarian closure. We cannot know what capitalism is because, according to Giroux’s logic, it is fraught with differences (of race) not the singularity of “surplus labor.” In Giroux’s pedagogy, there is no capitalism (“totality”), only cultural effects of capitals without capitalism (“differences”).

Giroux represents his gutting of class as a radical and ground-breaking notion that will lead to liberation of the oppressed. However, he never completes the logic of his argument because in the end it will degound his position and turn it into epistemological nonsense and political pantomime. If class is a universal category that obliterates the difference of race, there is (on the basis of such a claim) no reason not to say that race is also a universal category because it obliterates the difference of sexuality (and other differences), which is, by the same logic, itself a universal category since it obliterates the difference of age (and other differences), which is itself a universal category because it obliterates the difference of (dis)ability (and other differences), which is itself a universal category because it obliterates the difference of class (and other
differences). In short, the social, in Giroux’s pedagogy is a circle of oppressions, none of whose components can explain any structural relations; each simply absorbs the other ("class is actually lived through race," paraphrasing Giroux) and thus points back to itself as a local knowledge of the affective, difference, and contingency. Class explains race; it does not absorb it as an experience (see Butler, "Merely"), nor does it reduce it to the contingencies of ethnicities (Hall, "New") or urban performativities (Kelley, Yo’). To put it differently, since in this pluralism of oppressions each element cancels out the explanatory capacity of all others, the existing social relations are reaffirmed in a pragmatic balancing of differences. Nothing changes, everything is resignified. The classroom of experience reduces all concepts (which it marks as “grand narratives”) to affects ("little stories") and, instead of explaining the social in order to change it, only “interprets” it as a profusion of differences. Teaching becomes an affirmation of the singular-as-is; its lessons “save the honor of the name” (see Lyotard, Postmodern 82).

Giroux’s program is a mimesis of the logic of the ruling ideology: as in all pedagogies of affect, it redescribes the relation of the subject of knowledge with the world but leaves the world itself intact by reifying the signs of “difference” (see Rorty, Contingency 53, 73). The subject, as I will discuss later in my analysis of Cary Nelson’s radical pedagogy, feels differently about itself in a world that remains what it was.

Giroux is putting forth a class-cleansing pedagogy: he erases class from teaching in the name of epistemology ("totalization"). But as I have already argued, epistemology is not an issue for Giroux; it is an alibi for hollowing out from class its economic explanatory power. Epistemology in bourgeois pedagogy is class politics represented as “theory”—whose aim is to turn class into a cultural aleatory experience. In Giroux’s phenomenological experientialism, lived experience is an excuse for advancing the cause of capital in a populist logic (respect for the ineluctable “experience” of the student) so that the student, the future worker, is trained as one who understands the world only through the sense-able—his own “unique” experience as black, white, or brown; man or woman; gay or straight—but never as a proletariat: a person who, regardless of race, sexuality, gender, age, or (dis)ability has to sell his or her labor power to capital in order to obtain subsistence wages in exchange. Experience, in Giroux’s pedagogy, becomes a self-protecting “inside” that resists world-historical knowledge as an intrusion from “outside”; it thus valorizes ignorance as a mark of the authenticity and sovereignty of the subject—as independence and free choice.
The naturalization of ignorance (as a sign of the authenticity of experience) takes place in diverse cultural idioms. In a note to his brother (who had advised him to read Sophocles, Aristotle, Racine, and Hegel), Tobias Wolff—who not only teaches at a university, as a professor of creative writing at Stanford University, and thus shapes the ideas and attitudes of many students, but who also reaches a multitude of middle-class readers through his popular short stories—takes this cult of nonthinking to its American limit. In a pseudo-mocking tone, he responds to his brother’s advice on a yellow post-it by reasserting his tough, all-American non-thinking: “I still don’t know any of the stuff in here, and I’m a Full Professor, Mr. Smarty Pants!” (22).

Giroux’s anti-conceptual pedagogy turns teaching into an agency of capital by which the working of dominant ideology is legitimated as the spontaneous experience of the citizen. Experience—the incommensurable spontaneous affect—becomes the protector of wage labor and its class system (see Lenin, What 373–97).

**Class and Material Conditions**

The concept of class is fundamental to pedagogy. But contemporary pedagogy, as I have already suggested, has evaded all the material relations that shape its lessons by taking an idealist epistemological route and textualizing not only “class” but the very analytical means (“concept”) by which class becomes an explanatory critique (rather than simply a descriptive index) of the social relations of property. “Concept” is dissolved in the tropics of language by such writers as Paul de Man, who argue that all concepts are metaphors and, therefore, have no purchase on objective reality: they are simply rhetorical traces (135–59). “Concept,” as I argue later in my theorizing of objectivity, is produced not discursively but in the practice of labor: as humans act on the material world, they construct concepts in their dialectical interactions with the sensory and the abstract. The empirical fact that concepts are articulated in language does not mean that they are produced by language. Concepts are the effect of world-altering human activities, what Marx calls practice/practical—the transformation of labor into self-activity: “The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but a practical question” (Marx, “Theses” 6). In bourgeois pedagogy, class is textualized and translated into an indeterminate (“problematic”) notion in order to make it useful in producing a culturalist understanding of modern capitalism (see Derrida, Spectres 55; “Politics” 204; “Marx and Sons” 235–40). Class is displaced by discourse
and culture through these and similar epistemological alibis as well as through a culturalist reading of recent history that claims that "cultural revolutions of our time" have given "culture" a "role of unparalleled significance in the structure and organization of late-modern society" (Hall, "Centrality" 209). Class, in other words, can no longer explain culture, which has become autonomous, self-activating, and thus interpretable in its own terms. In the dominant pedagogy, class is said to be dead (Pakluski and Waters). Epistemologically, these arguments are not rigorous; they are ideological readings representing themselves as non-partisan. Epistemologically, if one includes their claims in the conditions they set for cognitive reliability, their own cognitive status will lose its authority and collapse in its own undecidability. When Derrida, for example, claims that "class" can no longer provide reliable knowledge of "a certain capitalist modernity," he must have somehow obtained a decidable knowledge of "a certain capitalist modernity" in order to be able to announce in such a decided and authoritative way his conclusion that class fails to offer sound knowledge of modern capitalism ("Marx and Sons" 236; "Politics" 204). For him to allow any reliable knowledge (including his own knowledge of class and capitalism) is contradictory to his very epistemology, which claims that all knowledges are undecidable because they cannot be grounded in an objective reality; all will, therefore, have to accept their fate as effects of the tropic playfulness of signs. Epistemology, here as elsewhere, is an ideological alibi for twisting class into a nonexplanatory concept. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, to give another example of the use of theory to institute a neoliberal economics, dismisses the objectivity of class as "a trafficking in ineluctable essences" and diffuses class in the discourses of power, which is the customary way, in bourgeois pedagogy, to displace exploitation with oppression (12, 25–51, 255–84).

My interest, however, is not in deconstructing the deconstructors, but, as I indicate later in my discussion of objectivity, to examine the material conditions of their epistemology. If one reads Derrida’s claim carefully, one finds that it is a dogmatic repetition of a neoliberal banality about radical structural change in capitalism. This is a cliché that frames almost all bourgeois writings on pedagogy from Hall’s notion of “cultural revolution” and Fukuyama’s “end of history” to Huntington’s “clash of civilization” and Jameson’s “postmodernism” stories. Abandoning class critique is an ideological move; it is “an ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas” (Marx and Engels, German 59).
Even when the objective structures of class are acknowledged—as, for example in the writings of Pierre Bourdieu—they are overwritten by cultural values, affect, and subjective perception and are thus subverted as explanations of the social relations of property: “A class is defined as much by its being-perceived as by its being, by its consumption—which need not be conspicuous in order to be symbolic—as much as by its position in the relations of production (even if it is true that the latter governs the former)” (*Distinction* 483).

Having buried class in language, perception, and culture, radical pedagogy, as I suggested in my discussion of Giroux’s pedagogy, has focused on such ancillary contradictions of capitalism as gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. It represents this altering of its focus as a radical subversion of capitalism. Contrary to such differentialists as Judith Butler, the silencing of the economic (class) and the voicing of cultural differences in sexuality, race, and gender support rather than subvert capital. The continuation of capitalism is in no substantive way dependent on oppressing people on the basis of their sexuality, gender, race, or other cultural identities. In advanced capitalism, women and men, black or white, gay or straight, “All are instruments of labour, more or less expensive to use” (*Marx and Engels, Manifesto* 52–53). What matters is the cost of labor not the identity of the laborer—which is another way of saying that the only issue is the class issue. In fact the major transnational corporations are now in the forefront of identity politics and the struggle for cultural equality. Microsoft, 3M, Bank One, Steelcase, Pacific Co, and Exxon are among the companies that have decided to go to the United States Supreme Court to defend the admissions policies of the University of Michigan, which include race as a factor in selecting students. Cultural equality is not only not subversive of capital, it is its friend: identity politics is perfectly compatible with the exploitation of workers; it is, in fact the very ground of transnational capitalism. In her conversation with Judith Butler about her essay, “Merely Cultural,” Nancy Fraser discusses the “economic disabilities of homosexuals” and reassures Butler that “The good news is that we do not need to overthrow capitalism in order to remedy those disabilities” (“Heterosexism” 285). Capitalism can remedy all such disabilities and continue exploiting the workers. The pedagogy of affective difference is a friend of differential capitalism. The only significant factor for capital is the rate of profit, not the sexual preference or color of workers. For pedagogy to abandon the economic (class) by using a thin epistemological alibi and managerial clichés about changes in capitalism in order to justify its retreat into the cultural is to...
neglect to educate students as critique-al citizens and thus fail as a transformative pedagogy for democratic society.

The objective reality of class, even after its repeated burials, continues to trouble contemporary pedagogy, which has started to talk worriedly about class. Its writings, however, empty class of all its economic content by turning class from a structure of the social relations of production into a cultural semiotics of lifestyles and cultural capital. Contemporary pedagogy, in other words, converts class into a poetics of singularity—anecdotes of ironic, ambivalent, and playful lifestyles, status, and identity. Rita Felski’s notion of class is exemplary of the ways in which class is carefully hollowed out of any economic content and turned into a narrative of cultural identity and lifestyle (33–54). She makes class into a fictional device—a means of plotting a story about a “lower-middle class” identity—and turns it into an affect. Naming a cultural identity (the “lower-middle class”) enables her to declare that the binary theory of class is polarizing and thus to repeat the familiar tale of bourgeois pedagogy that the Marxist theory of class is “of little use in a contemporary Western context” (35). She does not offer any argument as to why class should not be understood as the location of the subject of labor in relation to ownership of the means of production—a structure that marks the social division of labor. Instead, she recites the neoliberal clichés in rapid succession (the decline of the working class, technological change, and so on) as a justification for her positing something called the “lower-middle class.” The strategic role of the “lower-middle class” in class critique is that it—along with several other such mid-class categories—turns class “explanation” into a “description” of social stratification and thus obscure the rigid clarity of the division of labor under capitalism (see Ebert and Zavarzadeh). The “decline” of the working class, to return to Felski’s argument, does not signify the disappearance of the binary class division. It means that the exploitation of workers (the rate of surplus labor) has increased: fewer workers are doing more work. The technological changes have not changed the property relations that segregate people into exploiters and exploited. They have made the methods of exploitation more efficient and subtly ruthless. Capitalism has not changed; it remains a regime grounded in extracting surplus labor of workers but now deploys a “compassionate” rhetoric to mask the brutality of its practices. Class explains the dynamics of exploitation. Gutting class, in the way Felski does, and removing its economic contents legitimates capitalism and translates exploitation into mere oppression. It thus makes social inequality, which is constructed at the point of production, seem to
be the effect of maldistribution. Such views of class replace “production” with “consumption” and “labor” with “work” and consequently turn capitalism into a set of indeterminate cultural practices. Turning class into a contingent cultural sign and a fiction of identity is what bourgeois pedagogy promotes and rewards in the name of disinterested scholarship (when Felski’s chapter on class was first published as an essay in *PMLA*, it was awarded the William Riley Parker Prize).

The culturalization of capitalism through eviscerating class is now the dogma of bourgeois pedagogy. In her *Feminism is for Everybody*, bell hooks, quoting another radical pedagogue, equates class with “your behavior, your basic assumptions, how you are taught to behave, what you expect from yourself and from others, your concept of a future, how you understand problems and solve them, how you think, feel, act” (39). Class for her is a story of personal idiosyncrasies that exceed all social structures. In *Where We Stand: Class Matters*, she further fictionalizes class as stories of consumption, lifestyle, money and “real estate racism.” “Everyone in our world,” she writes, “talked about race and nobody talked about class. Even though we knew that mama spent her teenage years wanting . . . to have new things, store-bought things, no one talked about class” (17).

The annulling of class through a populist race experientialism has now become part of an affective activism in “white studies,” which in the name of unpacking the ideology of the normative (“whiteness”), actually uses whiteness to dissolve class into cultural semiotics and lifestyle (see Delgado and Stefancic). When “white studies” claims to have addressed class, more often than not class is buried under empirical and statistical details, as in Doug Henwood’s, “Trash-o-nomics,” which quietly equates “class” with “job” and by focusing on the “mid-and downscale” whites, turns class analysis into bourgeois social stratification theory and twists class (as Weber does) into a cultural marker of status, honor and prestige (177–89; 190). In “white studies” capitalism has a staunch ally who uses race as a sign of its social concern (thus acquiring moral authority) and then, in a left rhetoric, normalizes wage labor. It “radically” expresses a preference for cultural justice and more social equality within the system but not in changing the system itself.

The class culturalists view their work as responsive to the changes in capitalism. One of the more popular narratives of this change is articulated by Mark Poster (39–59). This story is rooted in the assumption that capitalism has so radically changed and changed the everyday that what was economic has become cultural. As a result of these changes, for
instance, as Poster puts it, consumption has become production (46). The objective (the material ground of class) in this story is narrated as a simulation: a simulacra that is autonomous from all referents and is a hyperreal of tissues of desire and representations (see Baudrillard). Such a view, which represents "new" capitalism as post-class, is itself a class theory. It converts the central material contradictions of capitalism into cultural differences. But the fundamental structures of capitalism—what should be the focus of pedagogy—are today what they have always been: the exchange of labor power for wages and the extraction of surplus labor from workers (profit). Nothing—not the internet, not information technology, not changes in race and gender relations caused by the demand of transnational capital for a higher rate of surplus labor—has changed this basic structural relation between capital and labor. This basic structure is also fundamental in the production of knowledge and thus should be the main focus of pedagogy. Bourgeois pedagogy, as I have suggested, instead dwells on race, gender, ethnicity, and other derivative contradictions and, in doing so, diverts attention away from class. Class is the index of exploitation. It is objective and independent from the affect, behavior, and sentiment of the individual worker.

A pedagogy that understand class—as an objectivity—will be able to contribute to its transformation. Without teaching for ending class, which is possible only through understanding it as objective, all acts of pedagogy become acts of cultural adjustment to the dominant social conditions—acts of learning "how power works" in order to manipulate it and make it work for them. Giroux calls the arts and crafts of manipulating power, "critical pedagogy" and call its manipulators "critical citizens." This is a citizenry, however, that is always concerned with how power works on "them," through "them," and for "them" (not the collective). It is obsessed with "power" and is never concerned with exploitation. It is, in the language of bourgeois stratification, an upper-middle class citizenry for whom the question of poverty (exploitation) is nonexistent, and the only question is the question of personal liberty (power), as Giroux makes even more clear in Breaking into the Movies: Film and the Culture of Politics and in Public Spaces, Private Lives.

In the name of a "pedagogy without guarantees"—which legitimates the right-wing ideology of "equality of opportunity" but not outcome and the bourgeois obsession with "self-definition and social responsibility," as if these were simply matters of "contingency and contextuality"—Giroux opposes a pedagogy of totality and rejects class as "the totalizing politics of class struggle" (Impure 12, 25). Indeterminate, non-totalizing
cultural interpretations ("producing a language") in pedagogy displace explanatory class critique, and consequently all structural material contradictions are rewritten as contingent cultural excess that surpass all structures. Consequently, racism, in Giroux's contingent pedagogy of adjustment, is not the effect of structural economic compulsion but a cultural oppression: the "legacy of white supremacy" (66).

Giroux and other critical pedagogues always criticize capitalism and regard their pedagogy to be resistance against it. Their criticism, however, is in practice a radical complicity with capital because it always erases the fundamental material contradiction of capitalism (the appropriation of products from its producers) and instead focuses on such matters as race, sexuality, gender, and the environment as autonomous sites of the exercise of power. When their teacherly criticism approaches capitalism as an economic system, it is finance capital that is their object of attention. Focusing on finance capital, however, represents money itself ("interest") as the source of wealth. In doing so, it marginalizes labor as the source of value and class as the marker of relations of property and exploitation. Replacing capitalism as wage labor with capitalism as finance capital has been the political goal in the writings of such post-al writers as Derrida (Specters) and Deleuze and Guattari (Anti-Oedipus).

"In a sense," write Deleuze and Guattari,

It is the bank that controls the whole system and the investment of desire. One of Keynes's contributions was the reintroduction of desire into the problem of money; it is this that must be subject to the requirements of Marxist analysis. That is why it is unfortunate that Marxist economics too often dwell on considerations concerning the mode of production, and on the theory of money as the general equivalent as found in the first section of Capital, without attaching enough importance to banking practice, to financial operations, and to specific circulation of credit money—which would be the meaning of a return to Marxist theory of money. (Anti-Oedipus 230)

Focusing on banking effectively diverts attention away from how "money" is obtained at the point of production and instead focuses on the institutions of its distribution, as in Jameson's "Culture and Finance Capital." In the manner in which Felski and others substitute class affect for class economics, in the left discussion of capitalism, the conceptual analysis of labor as the source of wealth and wage labor as the structure of exploitation are displaced by empathy for those who suffer at the hands of financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank, as in Amitava
Kumar’s *World Bank Literature*—a book of pedagogical mourning and melancholia. The grounding premise of “Culture and Finance Capital,” *World Bank Literature*, and other contemporary left writings on capitalism is that it is possible to have capitalism without oppression—namely, capitalism as a *compassionate* exploitation of people by people. Capitalism is for them always and ultimately cultural. It is, as Kumar writes, a web of “power relations” and “cultural practices.” In Kumar’s affective politics, banks are criticized in order to reform capitalism, not to overthrow it. The popularity of “bank writing” in bourgeois left circles now is, in part, grounded in the writings of Bourdieu, who theorizes “capital” as a form of wealth—a resource—that produces power (*Field* 74–141). Capital is, of course, not a thing but rather a social relation (see Marx, *Wage-Labour* 28–30; *Capital*, 3, 953–954) that is clearly recognized as such in revolutionary writings on banks (see Castro 288–92). Capitalism is not about “money”; it is about the social relations of property: class. Class is not lifestyle, income or job. Nor is it life-chances in the market (Weber), a state of mind, or a matter of social prestige or status. Instead,

Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy. (Lenin, “Great” 421)

Class is, fundamentally, the relation of the subject of labor to ownership of the means of production; it is the *objective* social relations of property, not a story of desire, affect, or power.

**The Loss of Objectivity**

The alibi of epistemology, however, has largely obliterated the objective from the scene of pedagogy. In the absence of a grounding objective reality, teaching becomes a matter of the teacher’s taste, which gets endorsed as knowledge by the institutional ritual of interpretation and the founding of that interpretation in language. But this founding represents itself as antifoundational and as floating on the wavering sign. By denying objectivity (and the objective social relations of production), pedagogy, in effect, becomes an applied science of class containment: it turns class
into matters of the performativity of lifestyle. Instead of contributing to transforming the social, post-objective pedagogy simply redescribes it (as in Rorty's, *Philosophy and Social Hope*) and resecures the status quo (as in Butler's *Antigone's Claim*) in the guise of a rebellious resignifying of the relation of the subject to historical material reality.

Pedagogy—in order to be transformative and act as an agent of social change—must base its practices on objective reality: its independence from and its priority to the subject's consciousness (which is the primary zone of bourgeois pedagogy). But objectivity has been so aggressively demolished in contemporary pedagogy in the writings of Derrida, de Man, Baudrillard, Foucault, Lyotard, and others that even to raise the question of objectivity now is to risk outright exclusion from contestations. What makes the matter worse is to say, as I have said, not only that transformative pedagogy is grounded in objectivity, but also to emphasize that it is a partisan pedagogy. To be partisan means to take sides, and taking sides according to institutional reason is the proof that this pedagogy is anything but objective. The "problem," however, is not in being objective and partisan at the same time. To be a partisan of the objective is to be on the side of the movement of history toward resolution of material contradictions and the return of humans to themselves as social beings—the end of all classes and the state. But the pedagogy of affect denies that there are classes: "They are then free to deny any class partisanship on their part and to insist blithely upon their sublime objectivity and angelic aloofness" (Selsam 13).

A neutral "philosophy, indifferent to the interests of this or that class, does not exist and cannot do so, so long as there are classes and class struggle" (Wetter 28). Lenin puts the matter more clearly, "The non-party principle in bourgeois society is merely a hypocritical, disguised, passive expression of adherence to the party of the well-fed, of the rulers, of exploiters" ("Socialist" 79). It is the pedagogue of the party of the rulers who simulates neutrality in the classroom in order to obscure his or her partisanship with the exploiters, thereby turning his or her account of reality into a fiction, since any objective account of reality will include a prefiguring of the end of class society. "The non-partisanship has always and everywhere been a weapon and slogan of the bourgeoisie" (61). The pedagogue of totality openly declares partisanship with the cause of a classless society and international economic equality. Being objective and partisan is, to put it differently, only a "problem" in the class imaginary of the bourgeois philosopher and his or her formulation of the objective.
Objectivity is not a matter of epistemology (*adequatio rei et intellectus*)—the correspondence of an isolated reality to a formalist sign system ("language") within a secluded consciousness as tested by prescribed criteria. Such a view of objectivity, as I will discuss later in the matter of "truth," posits objectivity in purely discursive and contemplative terms and does not allow for its role in grasping the world in order to change it. Objectivity is not an interpretation; it is an intervention, which is another way of saying that objectivity is praxis.

Idealist theory, to be more clear, equates the objective with statements about the objective and thus reduces the objective to a discursive matter ("statement"). Since only "statements" about the objective can be true or false ("water" is not true or false; "statements" about it are), and since all statements are in a language, the idealist theory concludes that the objective is a language effect and declares that "There is nothing outside of the text"; that is, "behind these existences of flesh and bone... there has never been anything but writing," (Derrida, Of 158–59). Objectivity thus becomes a matter of epistemology, which in turn is said to be a form of writing. In contemporary pedagogy, epistemology is a middle-term to give the textualization of reality a philosophical air because eventually the distinction in epistemology between "discourse" and "object" is eliminated by stating that "The entities discourse refers to are constituted in and by discourse" (Hindess and Hirst 19–20).

Objectivity is not writing (epistemology); it is the very structure of reality, which is another way of saying it is ontological. Bourgeois pedagogy, in an ideological maneuver concealed as a philosophical questioning of positivism, reduces the ontological to the epistemological and then deconstructs the epistemological as an effect of textual displacement and, in doing so, denies the existence of an objective reality. Idealist pedagogy, which is a theoretical arm of the ruling class, has always opposed the objective and objectivity in order to elevate the theological and the speculative and thus foster illusion in the mind of students—future workers. Positivism, which has ruthlessly opposed the theological and the metaphysical since the height of capitalist pedagogical theory in the nineteenth century, has been the target of unrelenting attacks by bourgeois radical pedagogy. The most recent assaults against positivism are mounted by post-al writings (poststructuralism, postmarxism, postcolonialism, postmodernism), which disperse the objective in the play of errant tropes (Derrida), in hegemonic consensus (Laclau and Mouffe), and in cultural affect (Hall). As my arguments for privileging the conceptual, the non-observable structures of the "working day"
(exploitation), the critique-al, and anti-instrumental teaching (that is, against teaching as "skills" training) demonstrate, the pedagogy of totality is antipositivist. Even though positivism has fought theological and metaphysical speculations, which are always spaces in which class interests lurk, it is, as a philosophical movement, subjectivist and antimaterialist (see Lenin, *Materialism*). The antimaterialism of positivism is now recirculated, with an antipositivist rhetoric, in the neopositivist theories of post-al pedagogies from poststructuralism (Derrida's corporeal textualism) and neo-Gramscian postmarxism (Laclau and Mouffe's empiricist hegemonism) to articulatory cultural theory (Hall's actualist analyses). The pedagogy of totality demonstrates the anti-critique-al instrumentalism of these neopositivist pedagogies by foregrounding their teaching strategies which erase the why of critique-al teaching and substitute for it the how of techne. Derrida, Laclau and Mouffe, and Hall are exemplary of the new pedagogues who, following positivist tendencies, deny concept, abstractions, and laws of motion and instead found their practices on the sense-able (that is, the sensuous and the observable), on rhetorical instantism and, above all, on semiotic physics to assert the singular and, as in all positivism, cancel the universal.

Objectivity is produced by human practice, the basis of which is labor—material production. To be more clear, objectivity is the outcome of "social metabolism," the dialectical relation of labor and nature (Marx, *Capital* 1, 198). By "dialectical," I do not mean "two-way," "hybrid" and/or "multifaceted"—as Euroamerican marxists do. Rather, I use the concept as "the study of contradiction in the very essence of objects" (Lenin, "Conспектus" 251–52). Contradictions, class struggles, the law of value, and social and economic crisis, which form the foundation of all contemporary social practices, are not epistemological. Rather, they are the fundamental structure of reality under wage labor. In other words, as humans produce their material life through their labor, they produce the objective (world). In producing their material life, to be precise, humans "enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will" (Marx, *Capital* 21). The subject of transformative pedagogy is the structure of these objective relations (that underlie knowledges), which are produced by humans but are independent from their consciousness, since "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness" (22). The pedagogy of totality is both objective and emancipatory—it is emancipatory because it is objective: "[K]nowledge which cannot be regarded as objective is powerless or useless.... The practices relying on
such pseudo-knowledge are adventurist and even harmful. Failing to meet the requirement of objectivity, they are bound to become arbitrary" (Naletov 139).

The eradication of the objective is always and ultimately an economic act: it is part of the class struggles of our time over the surplus labor of the global proletariat. By obscuring the objective, for instance, triumphalist neoliberalism has effectively marginalized (objective) labor, which is the source of social wealth (and thus of science) and instead has valorized the (subjective) consciousness as producer of wealth (knowledge), as in the concept of "knowledge capitalism." The fact that the "subjective" is itself an accumulation of many objectivities—it is produced in the production of material life—is concealed by the theological theories of the autonomy of consciousness popularized by such writers as Jacques Lacan, Emmanuel Levinas, and the recirculation of Bergsonian theosophy in the religious writings of Deleuze, Guattari, and new feminist theosophers such as Elizabeth Grosz.

The pedagogy of totality, through class critique, unpacks the theo­semiotics of consciousness-as-excess that now dominates radical bourgeois pedagogy. To focus on individual consciousness and language instead of the objective world is to mis-educate people by teaching them the textual strategies of deep fantasizing about themselves and their place in the world-as-is instead of the knowledge that enables them to act on the world. In the end, this lesson only naturalizes wage labor and the fantasizers' subservient position in it. As the objective economic reality of wage-labor produces wealth for the transnational bourgeoisie and brings misery and daily alienation to the rest of people, students who are taught by the pedagogy of the affective that objectivity is a language fiction, learn to compensate for their abjection through retreating into deep cultural dreaming and consuming popular culture, which like the pedagogy of affect manufactures mass fantasies. To teach for human emancipation, pedagogy has to abandon the fetish of consciousness and language so that it can re-ground itself in the objective reality of human labor.

Objectivity is historical—that is, it is the effect of labor relations (independent from the subject's will). In other words, objectivity is relative to the state of labor and science (which is accrued surplus labor): "We can only know under conditions of our epoch and as far as these allow" (Engels, Dialectics 245). Transformative pedagogy recognizes "the relativity of all our knowledge, not in the sense of denial of objective truth, but in the sense of the historically conditional nature of the limits
of the approximation of our knowledge of this truth”; in other words, “the limits of approximation of our knowledge to the objective, absolute truth are historically conditional, but the existence of such truth is unconditional” (Lenin, Materialism 135). Therefore, the status of the “concept” in the pedagogy of totality is not absolute but asymptotic: “The concept of a thing and its reality, run side by side like two asymptotes, always approaching each other yet never meeting” (Engels, “Letter” 456).

The pedagogy of totality is the pedagogy of the objective. It is the pedagogy of truth. Truth, like objectivity, in the pedagogy of totality is grounded in production practices, which are the foundation of knowledge determining objective reality and thus its truth, which is independent from the consciousness of individuals. Production practices do not merely reproduce physical existence. Rather, they are material activities—the production of goods but also class struggle—that form the truth of social life. This is another way of saying that bourgeois philosophy’s epistemological criteria of truth—the correspondence of thought with reality—is an ideological and class theory, since it defines truth in purely meditational and contemplative terms. Such a theory of truth is aimed at understanding the world as is without recognizing the role of truth in changing the world. Unlike Kantian pedagogy, which is based on the unknowability of truth (“the thing-in-itself”), the pedagogy of totality is grounded in the principle of the knowability of the world, the objectivity of that world. Thus, its lessons are lessons of the truth of that objective world—which enable the student to know it in order to transform it. Lenin writes, “From living perception to abstract thought, and from this to practice—such is the dialectical path of cognition of truth, of cognition of objective reality” (“Conspectus” 171).

Truth, like objectivity—its material condition—is excluded from contemporary pedagogy in part because it is assumed to bring closure to meaning by producing the binary of true/false and therefore leaving out the ethical, which is seen as keeping teaching open. Consequently, suspension of truth is represented in the pedagogical imaginary as the sign of open and democratic teaching, while teaching that is grounded in truth and objectivity is marked as closed and totalitarian. What is called totalitarianism is, of course, a critique of the economic interests of the ruling class that represents itself as the universal interest of all classes. To disenable this critique, dominant pedagogy brings together an array of arguments ranging from the hermeneutical (anti-positivism) to the psychoanalytical (the role of language in the structuring of the unconscious
of desire in the subject of knowing); from the populist (valorizing "experience" as "reality" itself) to theories of textualizing the objective (Derrida, *Margins* 207–71).

**Pedagogy in Ruins**

The most familiar of several decades of teacherly attacks on truth and objectivity is Derrida’s analytics of textuality in “The Future of the Profession or the University Without Condition (Thanks to the ‘Humanities,’ what Could Take Place Tomorrow)” — his many recent protestations, backtrackings and self-revisions notwithstanding (“Afterword: Toward An Ethic of Discussion,” 14–147; 159); Lyotard’s notion of indeterminate judgment (*Diffręd*); and Foucault’s poetics of power. These and similar texts have provided what amounts to an analytics of pedagogy in ruins, which is now popularized in such books as Barbara Johnson’s *Pedagogical Imperative*; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s *Outside in the Teaching Machine*; Bill Readings’ *The University in Ruins*; J. Hillis Miller’s *Black Holes*, and Peggy Kamuf’s *The Division of Literature or the University in Deconstruction*. I put aside here the history of the rhetoric of ruin (Kamuf, 57–74) and in this brief discussion focus on *The University in Ruins* because it is basically a partisan summary of writings on pedagogy in ruins.

Readings’ idea of pedagogy is a broad paraphrase of Lyotard’s theory of the university (*Postmodern*); his notion of “dispensing justice without models” (*Just* 26), and his views of politics not as a transforming practice of the existing situation (that, according to Lyotard, would be a closure) but as keeping the question of justice indeterminate and open (*Political*). In the same manner that Lyotard assumes justice is most effective when it abandons truth as its grounding principle and becomes an indeterminate ethics—a pragmatics of judgment—Readings claims that pedagogy is most productive when it moves beyond truth and objectivity, which he equates with totalization, and becomes a pragmatic of “Thought.” Thought in the pedagogy in ruins is a sign without referent; it is a thinking without “ideas,” since ideas impose closure on thinking and end up totalizing. Thought is therefore a thinking that has no answers but keeps the question open (159, 160).

“Ruins” (as in the pedagogy of ruins), should not be un-ruined; the teacher should not seek to “re-unify those ruins” and produce a new “whole” (totality) out of them (19). Each separated part of the “ruins” is an autonomous singularity and the mark of an irreplaceable heterogeneity (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 208–31). This then is not a fallen
pedagogy. On the contrary, pedagogy in ruins is proclaimed to be a liberated pedagogy, freed from the totalitarian logic of Kant’s university (of “reason”) and Humboldt’s university (of “culture”) into the University of Thought. Thought here is an empty sign that refuses to accept a referent and be filled with ideas. The goal of the pedagogy of Thought is Lyotardian: to keep thinking open and not allow “ideas” (that impose closure on it) to justify themselves by any particular action (such as revolution) (159).

Pedagogy in ruins is an aesthetic politics represented as an interminable teaching without closure. To be clear, Thought for Thought’s sake is a traditional liberal value that, in the name of a rigorous openness (“disinterestedness”), avoids commitment to anything but the pragmatic delight of self-reflexive thinking. Readings represents it in the rhetoric of the “post” as the pedagogy of a deconstructed progressive pedagogy—progressive without progressiveness, since progressive is itself a teleological category and thus a species of totalizing. The progressive in the pedagogy in ruins is a device for accepting the existing social relations of production with the alibi of being post-ideological and therefore pragmatic, acting on behalf of all people’s interests. Its main goal is “to make things happen” within the system (178). It is therefore against transformative knowledge of social totality (revolutionary theory), which it regards to be radical and futile (163). Consequently, it displaces revolution with meditation and puts in place of “permanent revolution” a “permanent question.” Pedagogy in ruins is, in other words, opposed to changing anything in a big way (177-79). In the name of openness, it installs opportunism and avoidance of commitment as goals of progressive pedagogy. The only commitment that the pedagogy of “permanent question” is willing to make is commitment “without belief”: a commitment for the sake of commitment (175). Thought, it should be clear by now, is resistance to closure, to concluding and acting on that conclusion. In fact, if Thought reaches a conclusion, it becomes “idea,” and ideas are “answers,” which is another way of saying they are acts of abuse and closure. What Readings proposes as a radical pedagogy is a recycling of a Nietzschean banality (all answers are pathological) that is at the heart of bourgeois equivocations, oscillations, and institutional opportunism. The University of Questions is the university of transnational capital, which claims that since all answers are incomplete, therefore, the present answers (capitalism) are as good as any other. This injunction against looking for answers “other” than the ones offered by capital is the lesson of the University of Permanent Questions (Cotter et al.).
Ostensibly, the pedagogy of Thought is a textualized alternative to the corporate pedagogy of Excellence that Readings says (21–43) is the pedagogy of “accounting” (profit) instead of “accountability” (ethical responsibility). There is, however, no fundamental difference between the two: both are anti-conceptual, and both, therefore, replace “doing” with “thinking” and “politics” with “policy.” The University of Excellence represents un-thinking as post-thinking: the “new” professionalism and work ethic that have abandoned ideology and become sober and pragmatic, realizing that there is “no right place to stand” from which one can seek “other” answers than the ones now available since there is no “outside” to wage labor, which is another way of saying there is no necessity in pedagogy only contingencies (Robbins 196, 55, 103). The University of Excellence, in both its center-left versions (Robbins) and center-right arguments (Bromwich), is the University of Cynicism that justifies its class pragmatism by what it calls the interests of the “public” (Robbins 103) or community of tradition (Bromwich 133–64). The public and community are alibis that are deployed in the pedagogy of Excellence to obscure the class interests of capital and merge all classes into an amorphous non-entity, as if they all had the same objective interests. For Robbins, class is basically a job designation (29). The University of Thought represents its own cynicism as a skepticism about ideas because the idea is part of a metaphysics of closure. It thus names un-Thinking as a return to real thinking—namely “Thought,” which is a thinking without truth—an indeterminate ethics without assurance of a foundation, which is the textual pragmatic without pragmatism. Both the pedagogy of Excellence and the pedagogy of Thought give legitimacy to what global capital needs for training its new transnational workforce—a workforce that is Thought-full but un-thinking—educated but suspicious of (abstract) thinking; a skill-full workforce; pragmatic workers.

Given the importance that the pedagogy of Thought puts on language and textuality (language shows the rhetoricity of “ideas”) and the way it equates discourse itself with the social, it is telling that the semiotic conditions of the founding signs of both pedagogies (Excellence and Thought) are identical: both are signs without referents (Laclau, New 177–90). They are, in other words, empty signs that emphasize the indeterminacy of not only their own signification but the playfulness of all signs. A conventional analytic move (“deconstruction”) here would point out how the founding semiotic logic of the pedagogy of Thought is the same as that of the pedagogy of Excellence, and how Excellence and Thought have a “strange cohabitation”: Excellence is in a supplementary
relation with Thought. It is, in other words, the "other" inside of Thought that thought purifies itself from by constructing it as an outside in order to acquire a unitary identity for itself as self-same Thought. Thought in other words is not the opposite but simply a different version of Excellence. However, I am not interested in such a formalist reading but would like to place both pedagogies in their historical-materialist contexts and point out that both are versions of the pedagogy of the "end of ideology" that has provided transnational business with its guiding pragmatics of affect in which capitalism is represented as compassionate and Thought-full (see Bell and Fukuyama).

In fact, Readings himself seems to be worriedly aware of the sameness of the logic of Thought and Excellence and defensively tries to differentiate the difference (159-60). His argument is that Thought is different from Excellence because, for example, it "does not masquerade as an idea" (160). To say Thought "does not masquerade as an idea," however, further implicates Thought in the logic of Excellence because it implies that language (as the University of Excellence maintains) can be representationally transparent (non-masquerading). This contradicts Readings' entire argument about the opacity of language and its non-correspondence with empirical reality: the fact that, according to him, language ("as a structure that is incapable of self-closure" and thus "escapes instrumentality") is always already "masquerading as——" (187). This is how the pedagogy of Thought separates itself from the pedagogy of Excellence, which uses language instrumentally—to masquerade as something that it is not.

To secure the uncontested hegemony of Thought (without ideas) in the post-national university, Readings warns against social commitment (which might recognize Thought as an ideological strategy for cleansing the workforce from critique-al thinking), and he specifically argues that commitment to a new society should be abandoned because it leads to "answers" (totalization) and thus closes the questions that help to maintain the status quo by raising more questions about change (175). The citizen educated in the pedagogy of Thought is one who accepts the existing social relations and acts pragmatically and within the system (178). The role of both the pedagogy of Excellence and pedagogy of Thought is to persuade workers to accept the new ways by which they are exploited by global capital as their new freedoms to the pleasures of non-totalizing lifestyles—consumption without borders.

This is another way of saying that the pedagogy of Thought, like the pedagogy of Excellence, is a developed mode of corporate mysticism:
"The referent of teaching, that to which it points, is the name of Thought" (159). It is significant that Readings finds it urgent to immediately intervene and control the interpretation of his statement—to assert his intention—so that it is not misinterpreted as a mode of religious indoctrination and the slogan of the cult of the ineffable: "Let me stress that this [Thought] is not a quasi-religious dedication" (159). His intervention is theoretically interesting because the pedagogy of Thought formally teaches lessons in the free play of the sign and its excessive signification, which, it maintains, keep the discourses of reading open and allow for plural interpretations. Language, in other words, is non-instrumental, and the logic of textuality cannot be reduced to the Truth of what, for instance, the "author" has "intended" (71-72, 161, 187). Pedagogy of Thought textualizes "intention," "intentionality," and the "author" as devices for controlling interpretation in the pedagogy of totality. Again, given these grounding assumptions of the pedagogy of Thought, a conventional (deconstructive) analytics would dwell on the fact that all that is taught formally in the pedagogy of Thought is negated in its actual practice: it is, in other words, a corporate ideology not a post-partisan pedagogy as it claims (150–65). In order to rescue Thought from being mis-interpreted (that is, control its interpretation) as a religious and mystical device, Readings falls back on all the concepts that he has formally deconstructed. He deploys the "intention" of the "author" and even provides a personal testimony ("let me stress") to control the "meaning" of Thought (put closure on it) and subjugate it to his own will-to-Truth. The pedagogy of Thought becomes as totalitarian (in its closure of the meaning of Thought) as the pedagogy of Excellence that it critiques for its totalitarian (closural) teachings.

The point here is not that Readings is a confused and frantic apologist of capital masquerading as an egalitarian pedagogue of plural interpretation. Rather, the point is that his practices are fraught with contradictions, not primarily because of personal unthoughtfulness and shallow learning but because of the structural contradictions of the social relations of production under wage labor (class interests) that determine the practices of pedagogy (of Thought). He tries to "solve" these material contradictions through idealist and speculative maneuvers and the performativity of discursive strategies: language as the excess of meaning produced by the play of the sign; Thought (without ideas); ruins (as the architecture of freedom); ethics (as accountability); values and civility. The material contradictions of social relations, however, are not solved by discursive interventions; at the most, they are merely covered up. This imposed,
idealistic solution to material and historical contradictions gives the pedagogy of Thought its religious makeup. The pedagogy of Thought (without ideas) is a religious pedagogy not because the “author” “intends” it to be, but because of its class task: it inverts objective class interest, putting in its place pure speculations that construct a “posthistorical” zone of the ineffable (the sublime of the “ruins”). The pedagogy of Thought (without ideas) supplies the new global labor force with a “religion which is an inverted world consciousness” because it is itself part of an inverted world. As Marx writes,

Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point d’honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, its universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realization of the human being since the human essence has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly a struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion. . . . The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. The call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. (Critique 244)

Religion is the “spiritual aroma” of the pedagogy in ruins. The religious is translated, by the trope of “ruins” (the site of ineffable singularities), into aesthetics. Aesthetics produces the spiritual aroma of religion for the class fractions that have become thoroughly secular but need this “aroma” to deal with the material contradictions of the everyday.

The “aroma” is institutionalized in culture through the post-truth pedagogy of aesthetics—the anti-conceptual and non-analytical teaching that remains, in Kant’s terms, a matter of the subjective and inexplicable feelings of the teacher. “The judgment of taste is therefore not a judgment of cognition and is consequently not logical but aesthetical, by which we understand that whose determining ground can be no other than subjective” (Kant 41). Kant is, of course, the master theorist of contemporary liberal pragmatism, which, after a cursory critique of his idealism, recirculates his anti-materialism and anti-science position (the unknowability of “The Thing in itself”) as the new path of teaching (see Lyotard, Lessons). Readings takes Kant’s aesthetics as the model for indeterminate (aesthetic) teaching. Teaching in ruins is aesthetic: “What is drawn out in education, is not the hidden meaning of Thought,” Readings writes, it is “the aporetic nature of . . . differend as to what the name of Thought
Pedagogy is ultimately an aesthetic act because it is aimed not at conceptual understanding of the "essence" ("hidden meaning") but at surprising encounters with "appearance"—namely, that which exceeds the "essence" ("aporetic differend"). In fact the pedagogue of Thought (without ideas) should be able to say as Readings says,

I have certain principles (more accurately habits or tics of thought), they are not grounded in anything more foundational than my capacity to make them interesting to others, which is not the same thing as convincing other people of their "rightness." (168; emphasis added)

Pedagogy has no claim to knowledge and objectivity ("rightness"). It could at most become "interesting," which is the condition of "taste," not knowledge of the objective. Its lessons, in short, are not in "thinking" but in "sense" and sentiment—the institution of the University of Aesthetics as the textshop of taste that teaches Thought takes place by a series of substitutions. First, Readings textualizes Thinking (with ideas) as a mode of totalizing and puts in its place Thought (without ideas). He then translates Thought into Taste. Abstract thinking is converted into tangible feeling, and the conceptual is abandoned as a form of closural teaching. Open teaching is seen as lessons in the sensual and the textural—the depthless surfaces that delight and surprise. Pedagogy of Thought teaches students to become savvy but suspicious of thinking. Thought, it turns out, is like Kant's judgment: anti-conceptual, not a cognitive practice but an exercise of taste, a (subjective) interpretation of the sign in its aporetic excess.

Since teaching is constructed as fostering a taste for interpretation not an understanding of the objective, it becomes the art of talking Thought, a savvy psychoanalysis that remains an "interminable process" (159). The teacher becomes a psychoanalyst who is institutionally appointed to help the student to become autonomous, but, in actuality, the student will never become critically sovereign: the student has to go back to the analytic session over and over again to obtain authority for his or her acts. The pedagogy of aesthetics teaches—as a mark of openness—an "everlasting uncertainty" (Marx and Engels, Manifesto 45). This is the uncertainty that transnational capital needs more than anything else in its labor force and is valorized as undecidability in contemporary pedagogy (see Derrida, Dissemination 173–285; de Man, Allegories 221–45). Adopting the concept of "post-historical" from Fukuyama, Readings designates the "new" university of the pedagogy in ruins as "posthistorical" (6; 119–34),
a university of intensities and desire (a pedagogy of body without organs—Deleuze and Guattari, Thousand 149–66) in which ideas are remnants of a discarded “historical” (totalizing) time (Fukuyama 3–51). The pedagogy in ruins, in other words, provides strategies that make pleasure (aesthetic judgment) the focus of teaching and banish critique that produces knowledge of class. Capitalism needs the pedagogy of aesthetics to teach workers a taste for life (consumption), an appreciation of surfaces and a reluctance to become participants in thinking any abstract totality that might provide them with the “big picture.” The pedagogy of aesthetics is a lesson in saturation with details.

The “good” worker is one who is Thought-full (has no ideas), and thus his or her Thought can be (re)filled with whatever the historical needs of capital are. The vacant (Thought) always and ultimately gets (re)filled with the ruling ideas, which are always and ultimately the ideas of the ruling class, since, as Marx and Engels say,

> The class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations grasped as ideas. . . .” (German 59)

One of the guiding principles of the pedagogy of Thought is the institutionalization of “ethics,” which it uses to privatize teaching as “a network of obligation” (158). This allows the post-national university in ruins to write into pedagogy the conservative agenda of (personal) “responsibility” and “accountability” (154). By converting economics to values, ethics becomes the applied science of mystification of class relations. Workers are taught to obey because, as Readings puts it, “We are obliged” to others “without being able to say exactly why” (188). The worker has an obligation of an inexplicable nature to capital without knowing or being able to say why other than that it is demanded by “ethical probity,” and since Thought is without concepts, there is no possibility of critical understanding of the obligation: it is simply an affect beyond the representations of reason (192).

This is one reason why Trotsky describes “ethics” as the “philosophic gendarme of the ruling class” (48). An unexplainable “obligation” rather than objective class interests becomes the law of the subject of labor. The
ethical, in other words, "solves" social contradictions—produced at the point of production—within moral consciousness, which it posits as transhistorical and thus autonomous from the social. It is another example of the spiritualization of property relations. Behind ethics, in the language of *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, class interests "lurks in ambush." Pedagogy of Thought is the return of idealism, whose other names in contemporary pedagogy are "ghosts" and "specters" in the pedagogy of haunting (Derrida, *Spectres*; Ronell).

**A Pedagogy of Tears**

The most immediate class task of aesthetics is to disperse the material contradictions of the everyday in the ineffable. But this is not all. The other, and ideologically equally important class work of the aesthetic, is the construction of *details* in the form of the "specific," the "concrete" and the "singular," so that obtaining knowledge of the social totality is obscured by the register of particulars: Bérubé, for example, uses details as "background information" to make it difficult to grasp "9/11" as a historical totality. Giroux demolishes class as a structure of totality by his radical pedagogy in which class is lived through the experiential details of race. Readings deploys the "ruins" as the unrepresentable singularities of Thought so as to render undecidable the way wage labor produces Thought as a nonconceptuality that fractures the social totality of monopoly capital.

Language is the performativity of details—as-sign by which the pedagogy of the aesthetic produces the aroma of the ineffable, and the interminable sign details ghosts in its lessons. The theory of the sign—putting forth details as agents of textualization resisting totality—is perhaps most clearly at work in Derrida's tract against totality inserted in his reading of Levi-Strauss's *The Raw and the Cooked*. As is customary in affective pedagogy, Derrida uses an epistemological impossibility to reach his ideological goal. Totality is not possible, he says, because totalization always already takes place in language, and language, according to Derrida, never corresponds with what is to be totalized. There is an epistemological fissure in the relation of signifier and signified. Totalization, Derrida writes, is both useless and impossible, not because one can never master all the empirical elements that are to be brought together in a totality, but because totalization is in language, and "language . . . excludes totalization" (*Writing* 289). Totalization, in other words, is resisted by the "play" of the sign-details of language: the trace, whose aleatory movements result in the "infinite substitutions" of signs
instead of a definite closure of meaning in language. The play of the trace-details of language is caused by the “lack or absence of a center or origin,” which makes it impossible to put details together into a stable totality:

One cannot determine the center and exhaust totalization because the sign which replaces the center, which supplements it, taking the center’s place in its absence—this sign is added, occurs as a surplus, as a supplement. The movement of signification adds something, which results in the fact that there is always more, but this addition is a floating one because it comes to perform a vicarious function, to supplement a lack on the part of the signified. (289)

Since the supplement is the mark of a lack (“it fills a void”), totality is a simulated presence—an imposed intelligibility (Derrida, Of 145). The signifier (details) without a centering metaphysics therefore becomes the space of the sense-able. If epistemological arguments are the arbiter of truth (as Derrida’s decided use of them suggests), then one should test the truth of Derrida’s own conclusions by his own logic: for Derrida to be able to argue the impossibility of totalization, he has to first accept the “concept” of totality which his epistemology has already shown to be not a concept but the play of supplementation. To say (as Derrida often implies) that he is using concepts strategically in order to textualize the metaphysics of presence through its constitutive concepts from the inside is not a rigorous case against totality; it is merely an eclectic meandering and political opportunism. His own procedure is enabled by totality.

The “war against totality,” to use Lyotard’s phrasing, however, is fought not only theoretically on epistemological grounds, but also in the more erotic lexicons of details, as in Jane Gallop’s *Anecdotal Theory* and R. Barreca and D.D. Morse’s *The Erotics of Instruction*, in which the scene of pedagogy becomes teaching of/for the unattainable object(s) of desire as excesses of pedagogical reason. The most familiar form of the reinscription of pedagogy as the practice of details, however, is its populist form as an affective activism, which is at work in the writings of such writers as Lawrence Grossberg, who represents the specifics of the affect as the site of the political itself, and Stuart Hall, who equates detailed specifics with the concrete of social struggles themselves. In Hall’s pedagogy, for teaching to be effective, it has to “Meet people where they are—where they are touched, bitten, moved, frustrated, nauseated” (“Editorial” 1). Why people are where they are—why they are moved or nauseated, in other words—is not an issue for him. He erases the history
of their feelings and reifies them as containers of affect; in doing so, he
mystifies the laws of motion of capital—how the economic shapes
feelings and how feelings change when the material conditions of their
formation change. Feeling (the sense-able) for him is an inert given,
separated from history. He marks the subject as a singularity without
class, whose traumatic frustrations are a free-floating affect in this
classroom of the tangible.

The “concrete” in bourgeois pedagogy—from Hall to Derrida—is
reduced to the sense-able in order to dismantle totality. However, the
concrete, in its grounding materiality, is a gathering of many abstractions.
To put it differently, it is “concrete because it is the concentration of many
determinations, hence the unity of the diverse” (Marx, Grundrisse 101).
The concrete is equated with details and specifics in contemporary
pedagogy and is used to legitimate the teacherly pragmatism that accepts
the dominant actualities—what “is”—which it conveniently represents
as reality and then acts within its already sanctioned parameters. This
teacherly pragmatism uses details to confuse “essence” and “appearance”
and to conclude, with Richard Miller, that since what “is” is the horizon
of the doable, the goal of pedagogy must be to undertake the practical by
cultivating the “entrepreneurial spirit” (“Let’s” 104). The concrete-as­
specific is further elaborated by Elaine Showalter, who seems to think
that the market is the real arena of human activities, and, therefore,
pedagogy should be a preparation for participating in it. Consequently,
any pedagogy that moves beyond details and the specific is treated as a
futile exercise in impracticalities bordering on absurdities. If “the real”
is what Miller, Showalter, Marjorie Perloff, Readings, Bérubé, and
Giroux designate as “real”—namely, accepting the actually existing
“cultural realities” and the “thoughts” and “desires” of those whom the
system has rewarded along with the system itself—then pedagogy must
be reunderstood as the science of absurdities, the science of the un-doable
and the un- Thought-full: disclosing the underlying logic of “the real,” so
as to demonstrate that the irrational is, in fact, the law of the seemingly
rational.

The pedagogy of details—the doable—is nowhere more systemati-
cally deployed to legitimate institutional pragmatism and block change
(through the rhetoric change) than in the writings of Cary Nelson. In his
“The Real Problem With Tenure Is Incompetent Faculty Hiring”—
which, for instance, deals with the relations of labor and knowledge—
Nelson not only accepts the existing political economy of tenure but also
tries to make it more responsive to the demands of capital. His main point
is an argument on behalf of administrative reason to increase efficiency, which is his code for a double exclusion: (a) exclusion of certain faculty members from membership on hiring committees so that the power is more fully concentrated in the hands of departmental oligarchs whose institutional power derives from their fundamental support of existing labor arrangements, and (b) exclusion from hiring of all pedagogues whose pedagogies do not fit the demands of the university of details for training an unthinking Thought-full labor force. In short, he wants to turn the hiring process into an automatic procedure for naturalizing the authoritarian system of wage labor and for selecting only those teachers whose work legitimates specifics and erases totality from the scene of pedagogy: those teachers, in other words, who conform to the new managerial normativities that the university has imported from big business. He argues for the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of hiring pedocrats (not pedagogues).

This business management use of details and specifics to give what “is” the look of the real is most actively at work in Nelson’s Academic Keywords. Here, he collaborates in listing a series of particulars (distance learning, the job system, merit pay, research, tuition) and through annotating them segregates them from their economicosocial conditions and then cleanses them from all their class contradictions. The result is that academic labor emerges from these annotations not as a systematic totality but as an assemblage of ludic singularities floating autonomously (see also Deleuze and Guttari, Thousand 3–25; 75–110). His annotations, in other words, turn the exploitation of labor and its systematicity into an ad hoc series of heterogeneous arrangements that have no single logic, in the same way that, for example, Giroux turns the totality of class as a structure of social relations into the local contingencies of the “experience” of race, or Readings converts the coherence of the university as an annex of capital into the “ruins” of aporetic trace-zones. If there is no single logic that determines all practices of capital, then there is no need for a conceptually coherent project to reorganize the university; safe, marginal changes here and there will do. Specifics, to put it more directly, become, for Nelson, the strategy for making totality unintelligible and thus blocking any total understanding of the working of the laws of motion of capital in the university.

Nelson’s strategy is to make the systematic and universal exploitation of labor by capital a local matter that can be redressed by what Marx calls, “a particular right.” But such a redressing is a strengthening of capital because, “the wrong . . . is not a particular wrong but wrong in
"general" (Critique 256). The “general wrong” requires a global and not a local (reformist) “right.” Academic Keywords is a management abecedarian of the new university of performative reason.

The reduction of the concrete to the simplicities of the specifics and details of realpolitik (the pedagogy of the doable); the dismantling of the social and collective, reducing it to the personal; and the privileging of the empathic are given even more discursive play in Nelson’s Manifesto of a Tenured Radical. The book is grounded in the populist rhetoric of affective pragmatism: what matters in pedagogy is that which has immediate practical “human consequences” (156). The pedagogy of totality is, in this populist rhetoric, simply a remote and undifferentiated abstraction. Nelson’s is an ethnographic pedagogy of experience in which only “local knowledge” matters. As in all local pedagogies of the realpolitik, Nelson offers a plethora of “particular rights”—specific institutional modifications—that have “human consequences” (how, for instance, to get the Dean to pay for your interview dinner) in order to obscure the structural relations of property under capitalism of which academic labor and (un)employment practices (paying for the interview dinner) are merely effects (161–62). For Nelson, getting the Dean to pay for your dinner, has real “human consequences,” while the “social relations of property” are a heartless totalitarian abstraction made by heartless people because Nelson’s understanding of property, like his view of academic labor, is localist. Property to him is “income” (a job) not “The totality of the bourgeois relations of production” which are “class relations”—this is another way of saying any changes “can only follow from a change in the classes and their relations with each other” (Marx, “Moralizing” 337).

All bourgeois pedagogies that evolve around realpolitik share the same reformist combinatory with minor differences in the arrangement of details. The goal of reformism is, in Marx’s words, to offer “particular rights” to redress “particular wrongs.” It thus represent material social contradictions as isolated “particular wrongs,” thereby legitimating the (unseen) system of wage labor: “The good news,” as Nancy Fraser says, “is that we do not have to overthrow capitalism in order to remedy” the “particular wrongs” (“Heterosexism” 285). To Nelson, “wrongs” are not systemic, and therefore he lists the list of “particular rights.”

In all reformist projects, through a series of discursive localizations, the singular takes the place of the collective, the private is valorized over the public, voluntarism displaces class struggle, and distribution/consumption is substituted for production. In Nelson’s reformist imaginary,
the "yuppies with heart"—that is, responsible individuals who act within what Readings calls a "network of obligations"—voluntaristically redistribute a portion of their income among others ("Tenured"). "Yuppies with heart," who are always already tearful with empathy, bring about cultural change affectively and through teaching the sense-able. They are the New Age tearful vanguard of what Mouffe, Aronowitz, Fraser, Giroux, hooks, Spivak, and Manning Marable, among others, call "radical democracy," which is put in place of socialism (see Trend).

The pedagogy of tears has become popular in the classroom in part because capitalism has always masked its violence at the point of production with cultural compassion, caring, and feeling in the processes of consumption. Bourgeois philosophy, which is "the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships," has with its religious aroma legitimated the affective, like faith, as an autonomous understanding of the social, which is itself dematerialized as a transhistorical "being" (Marx and Engels, German 59). The ideological work on "being" as an affective "caring" is intensified into "tears" in the writings of Derrida, Bataille, Kierkegard, Levinas and their popularization in such books as Mark Taylor's Tears, John Caputo's The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida, and Jacques Derrida's and Gianni Vattimo's Religion. The pedagogy of tears is grounded in the notion that social change takes place through a "change of heart": an altering of the affective consciousness of the individual who can help, through philanthropy and faith-based charity, to create a compassionate culture. Compassionate culture changes human relations, which then change social practices and bring about cultural justice through the redistribution of (mostly) income. Production practices (the economic system of wage labor) are themselves represented as a cultural making (see Hall, "Meaning").

The activism of tears teaches that social inequality is the effect of maldistribution and thus obscures the fact that inequality is constructed at the point of production (see Fraser, Justice 11–66). In other words, it repeats the post-al lessons of Baudrillard (Mirror) and other apologists of capital that capitalism has changed so radically that "production" (class) no longer is its shaping social factor. The pedagogy of tears legitimates existing class relations and the power hierarchies that derive from them at the same time that it formally teaches abolishing hierarchies in the classroom and denounces them as totalitarian. All pedagogies that teach human history and, with it, knowledge as markers of human freedom begin after abolishing the social division of labor.
The voluntaristic redistributionism of "yuppies with heart" is the mechanism of cultural justice in Nelson’s radical pedagogy. The idea that inequalities under capitalism are caused by (mal)distribution and, therefore, can be solved by faith-based charity and individual acts of philanthropic (re)distribution is presented by Nelson as an earth-shaking radical act. In actuality, it is the core of conservative social theory that uses private charity to repair the systemic inequalities brought about by capital. Nelson, like all conservative pedagogues, accepts wage labor. He just wants to make it more tolerable with help from "yuppies with heart" so that capitalism becomes more compassionate, caring, and feeling.

Nelson’s radical pedagogue is a cleric who sheds tears in the classroom for the poor but is unwilling to change the structures of the social relations of production that produce poverty. Instead of social transformation, he re-describes the relations of the poor and unemployed with the existing material conditions. He lets those economic conditions remain intact but redescribes the subject’s relations with them affectively:

Putting the left at the center of your life changes your needs and desires, your work and its rewards, your relations and conversations. . . . It changes your understanding of the past and the processes that brought the present into being. And it multiplies possible futures that might otherwise seem culturally constrained. (133; emphasis added)

The "radical" change, in other words, is a "change of mind."

Teaching suspicion of abstraction is the core strategy of the ruling ideology, which piles up details upon details in order to block a world-historical grasping of the contradictions of capitalism. In fact, bourgeois pedagogy does not treat the material contradictions of capitalism as moments in class struggles but rather neutralizes them by transferring them to the spheres of discourse and liberal debates (as in Gerald Graff’s Teaching the Conflicts) or naturalizes them as instances of textual pleasures—namely, as "semiotic richness" (as in John Fiske, Understanding the Popular 5).

Pedagogical Fence-Sitting
Human “freedom actually begins,” as Marx argues, “only where labour which is determined by necessity . . . ceases. . . . Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the real of true freedom . . .” (Capital III, 958–59). Only with the abolition of wage-labor will education supersede the subordination of humans to the social
division of labor ("training") and return humans to themselves as social beings. By using the alibi of the priority of culture over the economic (Hall, "Centrality") or by erasing the very concept of emancipation from the social scene (Laclau, *Emancipation[s]*) , contemporary pedagogy has opportunistically become a fence-sitter—a "pedagogy without guarantees." Pedagogical fence-sitting in the class struggle for human emancipation is itself "servility" to the existing practicalities (Lenin, *Materialism* 357 ).

To become a means for human freedom, pedagogy needs to be resituated in class analysis by means of a materialist critique, which, among other things, means that pedagogy must bring back to its practices the concept of "ideology." With the institutional influence of contemporary theory (poststructuralism, postcolonialism, New Historicism, feminism, globalization theory, cultural studies), ideology, like class, has been banned from pedagogy. The displacement of ideology in pedagogical memory ("Ideology" has gone a little out of fashion... since the mid-1990s": Turner 166) takes many forms, but the most common is the exclusion of ideology from pedagogical analytics by appealing to the authority of the Foucauldian notion of "discourse," which substitutes "power" for class and outlaws analysis of the relations of exploiter and exploited because such a materialist analysis leads to a "binary" (*History* 92–102). Once again, epistemology is deployed to protect and legitimate capital. In less obvious acts of conceptual cleansing and in the name of a democratic and "politically ambivalent" pedagogy, ideology is reduced to a thematics (a system of false/correct beliefs); a semiotics (representation); or a rhetorical detour in persuasion (by which "hegemony" is obtained).

Critiquing the dematerialization of ideology in contemporary theory, Teresa Ebert argues, from a classical Marxist standpoint, that ideology, before everything else, is a "false consciousness" about the relation of capital to labor. Ideology is a false consciousness in which the exchange of the labor power of the worker for his or her wages is accepted as an equal exchange ("Interview" 58–60). Ideology, in other words, is not an epistemological matter, nor is it a "discourse," a "representation," or an instance of "textuality" (even though it has implications for all of these); rather, it is an economic issue. It legitimates the ruling social relations of production that naturalizes the transfer of wealth from the direct producers to the owners. Marginalizing this materialist understanding of ideology, Althusser repeats the bourgeois gesture of epistemologizing ideology and concludes that since a Marxist reading of ideology is, according
to him, "positivist" (the epistemological shield protecting bourgeois theory from materialist critique) in Marx's and Engels' writings, "Ideology is conceived as a pure illusion, a pure dream, i.e. as nothingness" (159). However, in Marxism-Leninism ideology is a material practice, an active economic agent in class antagonism; it is the historical other of class consciousness—not a negative but a negation. Class critique is an unpacking of this negation and its material consequences in the naturalization of wage labor; it is thus a contribution to producing a materialist grasping of the world. Without such a materialist understanding of the world and the place of people in it, all pedagogy is an apologetics for capitalism. It is an apparatus for preparing the "servants needed by the capitalists" (Lenin, "Tasks").

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