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On Facts and Values: An Analysis of Radical Curriculum Studies

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Curriculum theorizing has focused on how curricula ought to be constructed (prescriptive theory) and, to a lesser extent, on how curricula are formulated and implemented (explanatory theory).[1] There is a chasm separating the two approaches. The first type of theorizing focuses on questions of what ought to be and employs normative and instrumental appeals, while the second approach examines what is and utilizes descriptive and explanatory theories. Generally curriculum theorists and analytically oriented philosophers have emphasized the distinct and heterogeneous features of each type of endeavor. This "traditional" position argues that one can never derive an ought from an is: that is, for example, one cannot derive what knowledge ought to be taught from a description of existing curricula. Furthermore, it is often argued, decisions over what knowledge ought to be taught are the outcome of individual value preferences. Curricular choices are reducible to individuals' values.[2] Finally, proponents of this position usually maintain that an investigation of the facts can be assessed objectively and should not be influenced by social or political values. Truth is to be found independent of ideological beliefs.

Recently Marxist (radical or critical)[3] theorists of curriculum have taken exception to many of these "traditional" propositions. These writers argue that the reputed separation between questions of fact and questions of value is simply mistaken. There are two distinct but related strands to the critical position. According to one view, knowledge claims (descriptive and explanatory theories) are always connected to some value position, tied to specific interests.[4] Employing the writings of Jurgen Habermas, these theorists argue that different knowledge claims serve either technical, practical, or emancipatory interests. The preoccupation with separating questions of fact from value is, according to this viewpoint, misguided. The critical tradition "emancipates" theorists from this predicament since it is able to "transcend dialectically" the false dichotomy separating questions of fact from questions of value. In the end, these authors maintain, the issue is not one of separation but rather a recognition of what knowledge serves which interests. The second strand in the Marxist position argues that it is both a peculiarity and an asset of the critical framework that it integrates explanatory and ethical concerns.[5] While this view tends to support the Habermasian linkage of knowledge and interests, it more explicitly joins explanatory investigations

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1. I have argued this position in an earlier unpublished paper entitled "Curriculum Theory: It Hasn't Worked — It Must Change." Here I will simply assert this characterization of the field.
2. This position is taken by Ralph Tyler. See Ralph Tyler, *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 4.
3. In this paper I will use the labels Marxist, radical, and critical somewhat interchangeably. This is not to deny important distinctions between the Frankfurt School's notion of critical theory and the classical nineteenth-century Marxist tradition or between classical Marxism and the recent work by Western academic Marxists. However, despite the differences all of the works cited here share a formidable debt to the Marxist tradition. This debt needs to be examined so that the radical tradition can offer cogent explanations, critiques, and alternatives to the currently existing educational order.
4. The work of Henry Giroux and Robert Everhart falls within this tradition.
5. Michael Apple's analyses fall within this category.

to evaluative and prescriptive pronouncements. An overriding concern for social justice guides and motivates this approach to the educational world. While such an explicit value affirmation may be objectionable to some investigators, the critical theorist argues that all researchers must ultimately decide on whose side they fall. Those in the radical tradition simply make their commitment explicit.

Although my sympathy lies with the radical framework, the obscure language of many of its proponents is troublesome. It seems that the traditional separation of fact and value is too rigid, but that the acclaimed "transcendence" achieved by the critical tradition is a bit of a muddle. Here I will argue that another approach exists within Marxism, and I will outline its implications for curriculum studies. It is important to clarify the critical tradition's position in this "debate." Curriculum theorists borrow from Marxist theory, and it is helpful to understand what is and is not countenanced within this framework. Basically, I will address the following two questions: (1) How does the Marxist tradition bridge the fact-value dichotomy? and (2) How does this accomplishment affect explanatory and prescriptive efforts in curriculum studies? The most convenient way to approach the first question is to focus on the Marxist critiques condemning capitalism and schooling. The first section, then, will explore the standards which Marxists employ to criticize schooling in capitalism and as a result of this analysis arrive at an understanding of the Marxist synthesis of fact and value. The second question will be addressed in the second and third sections of this paper. In the second section I will highlight the effect that the Marxist conjunction has on explanatory studies of curriculum, and in the final section I will discuss the implications of this conjunction for curricular prescriptions.[6]

THE MARXIST CONJUNCTION OF FACT AND VALUE

Marxists condemn capitalism, attempt to explain its dynamics, and call for the transformation of capitalism to socialism. Marxist educators criticize schooling in a capitalist society, attempt to explain its dynamics, and call for the transformation of public schooling and the larger society. Within Marxist analyses ethical evaluations and factual assessments are combined and entwined in single analyses. In order to understand the possible basis for this admixture of evaluative and factual claims, it is best to analyze the standards Marxists employ to condemn schooling and its curricula and then place these analyses within the context of recent work on Marxism and ethical criticism.

Generally Marxists condemn capitalism and schooling in capitalism as a form of injustice. Capitalism is a system of economic expropriation where one class, due to its position within a structure of economic relations, dominates and exploits the labor of another class. Capitalist social relations also mask (mystify) the underlying relations of society. In a capitalist society the social relations conceal domination and exploitation. Usually the ethical content of such concepts as domination, exploitation, and mystification and their connection to justice are not rigorously analyzed. It is assumed that those forms of social relations are unjust, therefore capitalism is unjust and morally culpable. Marxist educators claim that the structure of the larger socioeconomic system is unjust and that schools contribute to the reproduction of this unjust system.

These claims of injustice can be found, in different degrees, in most radical analyses. The critiques vary from straightforward but unexamined condemnations of capitalism and schooling to explicit but incomplete examinations of the moral basis for the condemnation. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis and Paul Willis criticize the inequalities of schooling in a capitalist society and, by implication, condemn capitalism for its injustices. Their apparent general and shared assumption is that capitalism and

6. The reader should be forewarned. What follows is an analysis of the theoretical basis for the Marxist claims about fact and value. The first section will focus on arguments within Marxist studies. So as to understand the implications of the Marxist framework for curriculum studies, I believe it is necessary to comprehend the pertinent aspects of Marxist analysis. The following section attempts just that.

capitalist schools subjugate individuals to an exploitative and unequal social system and that such forms of domination and inequality are morally reprehensible. They do not state baldly that inequality and exploitation are morally pernicious, but it is difficult to construe their meaning in any other fashion. For example, Bowles and Gintis state that "repression, individual powerlessness, inequality of incomes, and inequality of opportunity do not originate historically in the educational system, nor do they derive from unequal and repressive schools today. The roots of repression and inequality lie in the structure and functioning of the capitalist economy."[7] Willis argues that members of the working class, although struggling for freedom, are nevertheless inserted into a system of exploitation. He writes:

> The astonishing thing . . . is that there is a moment . . . in working class culture when the manual giving of labor power represents both a freedom, election and transcendence and a precise insertion into a system of exploitation and oppression for the working class people. The former promises the future, the latter shows the present. It is the future in the present which hammers freedom to inequality in the reality of contemporary capitalism.[8]

There is a pervasive message in these authors' works. Capitalism is characterized by unequal, repressive, and exploitative social relations, schools help to reproduce these relations, and such a social system is unfair and unjust.

Where Bowles and Gintis and Willis highlight moral standards through a critique of capitalist social relations, Henry Giroux emphasizes the moral element through a comparison of theoretical frameworks. Giroux contrasts "positivist" and "critical" approaches to school and society. For Giroux, positivism separates questions of fact from questions of value, emphasizes the factual realm, and, as a result, suppresses ethical concerns. Since this theoretical framework separates what Giroux believes are integrally related concerns, another approach is necessary. Contrasted to the positivist framework is the critical approach of the West German Frankfurt School whose intellectual roots embrace Marx. Critical theory does not separate fact from value. Instead, critical theory is "tied to a specific interest in the development of a society without injustice. . . . [that is] critical theory contains a transcendent element in which critical thought becomes the precondition for human freedom. Rather than proclaim a positivist notion of neutrality critical theory openly takes sides in the interests of struggling for a better world."[9] While it is not clear what the "transcendent element" is in critical thought which functions as the precondition for human freedom, it is evident that critical theory is morally informed and rooted in concerns of social justice and freedom.

Another prominent analyst, Michael Apple, argues that a standard of justice is integral to the study of schooling in a capitalist society. For Apple the explanatory and evaluative components of Marxist analysis are intertwined:

> To hold our day-to-day activities as educators up to the political and economic scrutiny, to see the school as part of a system of mechanisms for cultural and economic reproduction, is not merely to challenge the prevailing practices of education. . . . the kinds of critical scrutiny I have argued for challenge a whole assemblage of values and actions "outside" of the institution of schooling. . . . It requires the progressive articulation of and commitment to a social order that has as its very foundations not the accumulation of goods, profits and credentials but the maximization of economic, social and educational equality.
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> All of this centers around a theory of social justice. My own inclination is

7. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 49.

8. Paul Willis, *Learning to Labour* (Westmead, England: Gower Publishing, 1980), 120.

9. Henry Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition* (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey, 1983), 19.

> to argue for something left of a Rawlsian stance. For a society to be just it must, as a matter of both principle and action, contribute most to the advantage of the least advantaged. That is its structural relations must be such as to equalize not merely access to but actual control of cultural, social and especially economic institutions.[10]

The commonly accepted basis for Marxist condemnations appears to be a mixture of a rather broad standard of justice and an elementary conception of freedom. If fact and value are combined in Marxist analyses of schooling and curricula, then it seems that the standards of justice and freedom must be elements in that conjunction. In contrast I will argue that the standard of justice, although frequently employed in recent Marxist critiques, cannot play a part in the Marxist fusion of fact and value. Essentially, Marx thought that critiques based on justice were misguided and seriously inadequate. Given Marx's skeptical attitude toward the standard of justice, it is doubtful that the acclaimed transcendence would have involved a criterion of justice. Rather it appears that if Marx's reputed fusion of fact and value is to make any sense at all, it must be viewed as involving a standard of freedom, a standard contained within a naturalist ethic. It is when Marx's critique is viewed as based on a standard of freedom, one which argues that human beings are such that in order to be human they must be free, that it is possible to make sense of Marx's acclaimed conjunction of fact and value.

The Antijustice Thesis

Frequently Marxists are viewed as putting forth the following claim: Capitalist society is characterized by an inequality of basic social goods and resources, and it is this inequality in the distribution of goods which must be rectified. The inequality of distribution is unjust, and if the distribution were made more egalitarian, then all would be fine and fair. In response to such claims Marx was quick to point out that the central inequalities in the distribution of goods in a capitalist society arise not from the vagaries of distributive schemas but from the structure of the mode of production. In capitalism the inequality of basic goods and resources is the result of the antagonism between capitalists and workers. Whenever the mode of production is characterized by class antagonisms, the distribution of goods and resources will be unequal. According to Allen Buchanan this view constituted one of Marx's most central and radical criticisms of capitalist society. "One of the most serious indictments of capitalism — and of all class-divided societies — is not that they are unjust . . . but that they are based on defective modes of production which make reliance upon conceptions of justice necessary."[11] And furthermore, "The demands of justice (here distributive equality) cannot be satisfied in the circumstances which make conceptions of justice necessary, thus efforts to achieve justice inevitably fail."[12] As long as the productive structure of any society is characterized by class conflict, Marx believed that demands for distributive justice would be issued but not satisfied without a basic revolutionary change in the mode of production.

One might reasonably conclude that if calls for distributive equality require an alteration in the production relations, then the injustice of capitalism lies not in the distributive system but within the relations of production. Here the critique would state that the wage contract between the capitalist and the worker is unjust. The worker is paid a specified wage in return for his or her labor power, but the worker creates a value greater than that for which he or she is paid. Surplus value is extracted from the worker. The injustice lies in the fact that the exchange between the capitalist and worker is not equal, it violates the right of the worker to an equal exchange. While this

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10. Michael Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 12.
11. Allen Buchanan, *Marx and Justice: The Radical Critique of Liberalism* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld, 1982), 50-51.
12. Ibid., 51.

claim is frequently heard in Marxist circles, it seems that for Marx the exchange is fair and just.[13] It does not violate any rights of the worker. A rather extended passage from *Capital* points this out.

> The product is the property of the capitalist and not that of the labourer, its immediate producer. Suppose that a capitalist pays for a day's labour-power at its value; then the right to use that power for a day belongs to him, just as much as the right to use any other commodity, such as a horse that he has hired for the day. To the purchaser of a commodity belongs its use, and the seller of labour-power, by giving his labour, does no more, in reality, than part with the use-value that he has sold. From the instant he steps into the workshop, the use-value of his labour-power, and therefore also its use, which is labour, belongs to the capitalist. By the purchase of labour-power, the capitalist incorporates labour, as a living ferment, with lifeless constituents of the product. . . . The product of this process belongs, therefore, to him, just as much as does the wine which is the product of a process of fermentation completed in his cellar. . . . The circumstance, that on the one hand the daily sustenance of labour-power costs only half a day's labour, while on the other hand the very same labour-power can work during a whole day, that consequently the value which its use during one day creates, is double what he pays for that use, this circumstance is, without doubt, a piece of good luck for the buyer, but by no means an injury to the seller.[14]

Referring to this and similar passages Richard Miller writes,

> In sum, a wage bargain is an equal exchange if the wage embodies or commands the social labor needed to maintain the worker for the period in question. And Marx takes pains to show that this amount of labor will typically be less than the labor expended under the wage bargain. . . .
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> Marx certainly thought that any system in which production depends on wage bargains resulting in surplus value would eventually generate widespread servitude and suffering. Such were his reasons for being against all economic systems of this kind. This is a very different indictment from the charge that systems depending on surplus value should be condemned because surplus value violates a right to equal exchange.[15]

If Marx did not condemn capitalism for its unjust distribution of social goods or for a violation of a right to equal exchange in the wage bargain, he nevertheless appears to condemn capitalism for its infringement of workers' rights to dignity and freedom. Although later in this paper I will argue that Marx does indeed morally condemn capitalism for its infringement of human freedom, Marx does not base his criticism on a conception of rights. Marx believed all rights-based claims for equality to be inherently faulty. Marx argued that whenever a single rights-based claim is set forth, another opposing but equally valid right can be identified. A parent's right to direct and control the curricula for his or her child frequently conflicts with the community's right to make decisions pertaining to the child's education. An individual student's right to pursue his or her own educational interests without interference conflicts with the rights of others to a fair distribution of educational goods and burdens. Marx viewed this conflict between rights as an inherent aspect of all rights-based claims. And as Richard Miller points out,

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13. To be fair it should be noted that there is disagreement on this point. For a representative sampling, see Nancy Holstrom, "Exploitation," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 7, no. 2 (1977); Gary Young, "Justice and Capitalist Production: Marx and Bourgeois Ideology," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 8, no. 3 (1978); Ziyad Husami, "Marx on Distributive Justice," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 8, no. 1 (1978-1979).

14. Karl Marx as quoted in Richard Miller, *Analyzing Marx: Morality Power and History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 28.

15. Miller, *Analyzing Marx*, 29-30.

> Marx's specific and explicit arguments continue the case saying that every right is a right of inequality. They are meant to show that no right which his contemporaries had advanced was preeminent enough to resolve conflicts without encountering a contrary, equally basic right. That the general problem had not been resolved even approximately, despite centuries of trying, made it a good bet, by Marx's time, that it was insoluble.[16]

It does not appear that Marx condemned capitalism for an inequitable distribution of social goods, a violation of rights to equal exchange or as an infringement of basic human rights. For Marx, I believe, all of these standards were faulty. Justice was not a standard to which Marx appealed and therefore an unlikely candidate for the value element in the fusion of normative and factual claims. Today, those of us in the radical tradition who employ the standards of justice or equality must at least recognize and appraise Marx's own radical critique of these standards. We must revise the basis of our moral criticism or argue against Marx's position. It can no longer be assumed that a Marxist approach to schooling and society condemns the inequalities or injustices of a capitalist society.

A Naturalist Ethic

In contrast to those Marxists who condemn capitalism for its alleged injustices, there are those who claim that Marx critiqued capitalism because it frustrates the satisfaction of basic human needs and inhibits the flourishing of the human potential. Marx, the argument proceeds, believed this frustration and inhibition to constitute a moral transgression. In this view Marx's ethic is a naturalist ethic. According to such an ethic men and women have certain basic physical and emotional needs (e.g., hunger, shelter, and security) and as human beings are defined by certain essential capacities (e.g., a projective self-consciousness and self-determination). It is here, in fact, that the basis for Marx's conjunction of fact and value can be found.

Norman Geras outlines the rationale of Marx's naturalist ethic when he states that

> an ethical position resting upon a conception of human nature is a perfectly possible one, possible in the sense of being logically unobjectionable, coherent in principle. If one places value upon human life and happiness and there exist universal needs that must be satisfied respectively, to preserve and promote these, then this furnishes the value and the fact conjointly, a basis for normative judgements: such needs ought to be satisfied.[17]

George Brenkert also supports this view when he argues that for Marx

> that which man ought to be is discovered in the historical development which mankind effects. It is in this sense, that Marx claims that theoretical problems (such as the is/ought problem) can only be solved in practice. . . . Marx's contention is that a correct characterization of man and his course of development shows that freedom as Marx defines it, is the object of man. . . . An analogy might help. If the proper characterization of the nature of a cherry tree is as it exists in an orchard then the conclusion that it ought to be treated in certain ways — e.g. cared for so that it produces ripe cherries — would seem to follow. So too if we see human history as a continuous series of class struggles and modifications in the mode of production, which are interrelated and progressive in their development of man according to the categories Marx picks out, then the conclusion that man is a being which ought to be treated in certain ways — e.g. allowed to live and act freely — would seem to follow.[18]

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16. Ibid., 24.
17. Norman Geras, *Marx and Human Nature* (London: Verso, 1983), 101.
18. George Brenkert, *Marx's Ethics of Freedom* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 210-11.

Now Marx's conjunction of the fact-value dichotomy is accomplished at a rather high level of abstraction. Talk of universal needs, the essential constitutive elements of humanity, and the historical development of men and women is talk of a highly abstract and general nature. However, it is at this level that Marx joined the factual propositions about humanity and the ethical basis for his condemnation of capitalism. Human beings are such that in order to be human they require the satisfaction of certain universal needs. Capitalism frustrates these needs and therefore is morally culpable.

Although the list of needs and essential capacities varies according to the author, most commentators agree that for Marx freedom was an essential, if not the essential, aspect defining humanity.[19] So as to outline the implications of this factual and evaluative assessment for explanatory and prescriptive theories, it will be helpful to outline first the meaning of Marx's conception of freedom.

Marx's notion of freedom is not solely defined negatively, as the absence of social coercion, but also positively as a "life of self-development within rational and harmonious relations to others."[20] George Brenkert continues and writes that "stated most concisely, it [Marx's concept of freedom] is for one to live such that one essentially determines, within communal relations to other people, the concrete totality of desires, capacities and talents which constitute one's self-objectification."[21] There are three interrelated aspects of this notion of freedom. First, in order for men and women to achieve self-determination they must identify (objectify) their own desires, capacities, and talents. Secondly, in order to recognize and develop adequately these desires, capacities, and talents, individuals must "concretely" realize these personal attributes. A recognition and development of desires, capacities, and talents can occur only when people act in and on the social and natural world to transform it in accordance with their personal character (Brenkert calls this self-objectification). Finally, "Self-determination is only possible within harmonious communal relations."[22] The self-determination of all is possible only within a system of cooperative social relations.

The meaning of the first proposition, that in order to become self-determining one must identify his or her own desires, capacities, and talents, is not particularly troublesome. To be able to direct one's own life, it would be necessary to know what one is capable of and desires. Self-determination without a knowledge of one's desires and talents cannot be *self*-determination. Difficulties arise when one pushes further. Which desires and talents are conducive to self-determination? If one desires to spend an inordinate amount of time watching the waves lapping the ocean shore, does acting on this desire constitute an act of self-determination? Brenkert thinks it implausible, within a Marxist ethic, to call such a person free: "In certain circumstances our desires may become fetters on us, powers over us."[23] When a single desire becomes all important and does not allow the fulfillment of a "totality of desires, capacities, and talents" self-determination is inhibited. Brenkert, however, admits that the fulfillment of an individual's "totality" of desires is "silly." Some desires conflict, and others require more time and energy to develop fruitfully. If a rigid adherence to actions based on particular desires fetters self-development and acting on all desires is simply infeasible, one looks for general guidelines to indicate the possibilities for self-development. Brenkert believes Marx provides such guidelines, but a close inspection of Brenkert's text does not reveal any formulation. While this lacuna does point to an insufficiency

19. There is disagreement over whether or not Marx's value of freedom can be construed as a *moral* value. See Allen Wood, *Karl Marx* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), chaps. 9 and 10.

20. Brenkert, *Marx's Ethics of Freedom*, 88.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., p. 93.

in Brenkert's elaboration of Marx's notion of freedom, it seems, in principle at least, capable of resolution.[24]

Another obstacle to the identification and development of one's desires, capacities, and talents lies in an incorrect understanding of how society works. Self-determination entails a recognition of which natural and social relations are and which are not amenable to human alteration and direction. All too often this recognition is obscured. Accordingly, Brenkert notes:

> Self-determination implies a knowledge and understanding of the nature of one's life conditions and relations, how they arose and how they operate. . . . self-determination involves individual control of one's affairs in light of a rational understanding of the situation in which one lives and the nature of the processes underlying that situation. Those who live under capitalism may believe that they are self-determining and free, but in reality they are not. This is true not only of the proletarian but also the capitalist.[25]

The second proposition may be more obscure than the first. The essential idea behind Marx's notion of self-objectification is that humans come to know who they are only through acting in and on the social and natural world. Through acts of transformative labor an individual objectifies him- or herself and comes to know him- or herself.[26] This does not strike me as an exceptionally controversial or troubling notion. It may be contested that self-objectification is not the only or most efficacious route to the recognition and development of an individual's desires, capacities, and talents. Self-knowledge may arise from introspection, where little if any transformative action occurs. But it seems Marx and Brenkert would argue that the development of one's capacities and talents necessarily requires action in the real world and not mere contemplation.

The third aspect of Marx's conception of freedom, the requirement of communal social relations, does not further define Marx's notion of freedom, but rather stipulates that communal social relations are a necessary condition for the exercise of a fully developed sense of freedom. The community makes possible the exercise of self-determination. Brenkert's elaboration of the Marxist conception of community takes many detours, but for purposes here it is essential to note two characteristics. In a Marxian community there would be a harmonization of the members' essential interests. Since Marx views human productive labor as the arena for self-determination, it is essential that any antagonistic interests in the productive sphere (class divisions) be replaced with a recognition of shared concerns. Secondly, the community would be characterized by human interaction on the basis of concrete qualities, not abstract powers. Production would be based on use value, not exchange value. When the essential antagonism of interests no longer exists to divide and separate people and when individuals recognize their shared human interests and relate concretely, then the foundation for individual self-determination exists.

Marx's solution to the fact-value dichotomy is accomplished through emphasizing the value of freedom within a naturalist ethic. Human beings are such that in order to be human they must be free. If men and women's freedom is restricted, if servitude rather than freedom prevails, then humanity is denigrated. Marx thought capitalism denigrated the lives of the majority, if not all, of the men and women under it. In essence, capitalism was a source of human servitude, and it was Marx's explanatory task to show how capitalism enslaves people. Educators working within this tradition

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24. There is a striking similarity between Marx's notion of freedom and Dewey's conception of growth. Daniel Pekarsky has analyzed Dewey's criteria for growth in a manner that could prove helpful for a Marxist analysis of freedom. See Daniel Pekarsky, "Dewey's Conception of Growth" (unpublished manuscript).

25. Brenkert, *Marx's Ethics of Freedom*, 101.

26. Both Richard Bernstein and Nicholas Lobkowicz discuss Marx's notion of praxis and transformative labor. See Richard Bernstein, *Praxis and Action* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), pt. 1; and Nicholas Lobkowicz, *Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967).

are similarly compelled. Since individuals are peculiarly human only when they are free, schools and their curricula which contribute to a restriction of this freedom are criticized.

EXPLANATORY INVESTIGATIONS

Marxists hail the acclaimed transcendence of the fact-value dualism as an achievement of the tradition, yet little is said about how this transcendence and its normative implications affect explanations of schools and their curricula. Marxists are peculiarly silent about this facet of their framework yet seem quick to point out the presence of suspicious ideologies in other explanatory frameworks. The claim is frequently made that in mainstream social science, social beliefs and values determine what theories are employed and what findings are garnered. Accordingly, the "Marxist view of science" has been described as maintaining that

> scientific theories and the interpretation of data . . . are inevitably shaped — wittingly or unwittingly — so as to serve the purpose of legitimating the existing economic class structure. Hence the proponents of this view see research in the human sciences not as a search for objective knowledge but as a socio-political activity that reflects the social contexts and value system within which individual researchers do their work. According to this view socio-economically conditioned presuppositions and prior prejudices about the nature of human kind and of society force social scientists to produce theories and purported evidence that inevitably confirm their social prejudices.[27]

While this is a fair characterization of one Marxist view of science, it does not characterize major segments of the tradition.[28] However, for those who endorse this general position the problem becomes one of extricating Marxist explanations from the trap of their social context. The extrication has taken one of three routes. Whereas it is argued that mainstream science produces theories and gathers evidence which inevitably confirm its social prejudices and legitimates capitalist society, Marxist social science (1) is capable of minimizing these bourgeois values and distortions, (2) embraces the proper (correct, universal and/or proletarian) values, or (3) has transcended the fact-value dichotomy, sees the world relationally and therefore correctly. A number of seemingly intractable problems plague these alternatives and the noted Marxist characterization of science. I will not examine this general position but instead argue that a more feasible and reasonable position is available. I will maintain that the values emanating from the Marxist fusion of fact and value limit and direct what questions will be posed and what areas examined, but that an assessment of the validity of an explanation is, in the normal sense, independent of any moral or political value commitment. This is not a very "radical" or "dialectical" solution to the problems of values and science. It poses a solution similar to the distinction drawn between value relevance and value freedom by Max Weber.[29] I will argue that it is the most reasonable approach for Marxist explanations of curricula and schooling.

As outlined earlier, the Marxist conjunction of fact and value maintains that human

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27. Arthur Jensen, "Political Ideologies and Educational Research," *Phi Delta Kappan* 65, no. 7 (March 1984): 461.

28. The "Marxist" views of science range from a rejection of all science as positivist to a fetishization of the scientific method. My own sense is that the realist interpretation of science is a defensible one and adequately captures a Marxist analysis of society. For related discussions, see Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1978); Ted Benton, *Philosophical Foundations of Three Sociologies* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977); and Russell Keat and John Urry, *Social Theory as Science* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975).

29. See Max Weber, "The Meaning of 'Ethical Neutrality' in Sociology and Economics" and " 'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy," in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: Free Press, 1949). For a further analysis of Weber's position, see Richard Miller, "Reason and Commitment in the Social Sciences," *Philosophy and Public Affiars* 8, no. 3 (1979).

beings are such that in order to be human they must be free. Furthermore, Marx concluded that capitalism unduly restricted humanity's freedom, and for that reason he criticized capitalism. At least two basic normative positions can be derived from these propositions: if to be human means to be free, then Marxists value freedom; and furthermore, if capitalism unnecessarily restricts people's freedom, then Marxists devalue capitalism. Marxist educators, it seems, would be committed to these normative positions and would orient their explanatory studies towards uncovering just how the practices associated with both the public school curricula and capitalism unnecessarily limit the freedom of those employed and enrolled in the schools. A Marxist would most probably not be motivated to explain how demographic changes affect public school curricula, what makes principals effective leaders in curriculum development, or how contending status groups affect the development of school subjects. They would not explore these questions unless such concerns could be linked, through capitalism, to a restriction of individuals' freedom.

It seems that this proposal would be opposed by those who argue that personal and social values ought not to enter into our choice of explanatory frameworks. According to this position, the goal is to reduce the role of all social and personal values in the scientific endeavor. Here the Marxist concern with freedom and its restrictions in our current society would be viewed as either distorting the understanding of educational institutions or as an unhealthy preoccupation which restricts investigations and therefore limits an examination of schools and society. Such claims have been made. And yet it appears inordinately unreasonable and unfeasible to maintain that the role of normative appraisals in the choice of theoretical formulations should be expunged. In order to decide which questions to ask and what to investigate, criteria are necessary, and these criteria are always connected to a set of cognitive and moral values.[30] Curriculum studies include investigations of the role of teachers in implementing curricula, the introduction and transformation of school subjects, the cognitive and affective development of children, the bureaucratic and political regulations governing curriculum production and selection, and many other diverse concerns. In each of these areas decisions are made, at some point, as to what to investigate, what to explain, and what theoretical framework to use to study the area under investigation. Directing an investigation to examine whether curricula, in conjunction with capitalism, restrict individuals' freedom does not seem that much different from examining whether a particular curriculum enhances children's cognitive development. Both the radical and the cognitive orientation initially suppose that certain factors affect students' development and then apply the conceptual framework most suited to investigating their respective questions. Without initial beliefs or hunches about the way the world works, we would not have any explanations, much less explanations focused on curricula.

Although it appears reasonable to expect values to affect the direction and focus of explanations, it seems highly suspect to allow these values to influence an assessment of the validity of these explanations. Marxists may believe that schools and their curricula unduly restrict the freedom of the schooling population, but it would be unwarranted to allow these beliefs to intrude in an assessment of whether schools actually do restrict freedom. At times, unfortunately, Marxist explanations have appeared to be determined more by the framework's beliefs than the empirical world,[31] but this tendency need not be characteristic of Marxist explanations. I am not assuming that the ever-elusive "state of objectivity" will permeate Marxist approaches to curriculum studies. However, I am suggesting that a rigorous assessment of explanatory claims is in order and can be accomplished in such a manner that a Marxist and non-Marxist

30. Here I use the notion of cognitive and moral values in a very broad sense. It seems indisputable that explanatory investigations must employ the cognitive values of consistency, clarity, and the absence of internal contradictions. And since these investigations concern human beings, moral values come into play. Any human endeavor must confront peculiarly moral questions.

31. See the analysis by Andy Hargreaves, "Resistance and Relative Autonomy Theories: Problems of Distortion and Incoherence in Recent Marxist Analyses of Education," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 3, no. 3 (1982).

could, in principle, agree in their assessment of the validity of asserted causal claims. Exactly how this can be accomplished is a difficult but not intractable methodological problem. Elsewhere it has been shown that this can be accomplished.[32] In the remainder of this section I will establish the need for separating normative appraisals from judgments about the validity of causal claims.

In radical analyses discussion about the validity of explanatory propositions is confounded by the belief that validity is not limited to a theory's cognitive claims but is also a measure of its ability to engage people in meaningful action. A concern for the empirical accuracy of causal claims is either derided as "positivist" or overshadowed by a demand for a pragmatic or emancipatory "test" of a theory.[33] In the eleventh thesis on Feurbach Marx states that "philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."[34] Marxists have interpreted this dictum and applied it to explanations in a very pragmatic manner. Within this pragmatic orientation a valid and valuable theory is not one which simply explains phenomena, but one which can capably transform the social world. In addition to this view, there is the Habermasian notion of a "critical science" which claims that 'the methodological framework that determines the meaning of the validity of crucial propositions of this category is established by the concept of self-reflection, the latter (self-reflection) releases the subject from dependence on hypostatized powers. Self-reflection is determined by an emancipatory cognitive interest."[35] The validity of a proposition in a critical science is determined by its ability to engage its subjects in self-reflection and attain emancipation — freedom. Both the pragmatic and the emancipatory "tests" disregard the need for reliable procedures to assess the accuracy of their empirical claims. In *The Idea of a Critical Theory,* Raymond Geuss argues against such a position and states that if a "critical theory is to be cognitive and give us knowledge, it must be the kind of thing that can be true or false, and we would like to know under what conditions it would be falsified and under what conditions confirmed."[36] Essentially, Geuss maintains that if critical theory is attempting to emancipate people by transforming society from one social formation to another (from capitalism to socialism), it must be empirically secure

> (1) that the proposed final state is inherently possible, i.e. that given the present level of development of the forces of production it is possible for society to function and reproduce itself in this proposed state.
> (2) that it is possible to transform the present state into the proposed state (by means of specified institutional or other changes).[37]

That is, without realistic empirical assessments critical theory becomes a utopian fantasy. Recognizing that critical theorists posit an emancipatory test for their theory, Geuss formulates a dual test of validity. He writes:

> Scientific theories are cognitively acceptable if they are empirically accurate and are confirmed by observation and experiment; critical theories are acceptable if they are empirically accurate and if their "objects," the agents to

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32. See Daniel P. Liston, "Have We Explained the Relationship between Curriculum and Capitalism? An Analysis of the Selective Tradition," *Educational Theory* 34, no. 3 (1984).

33. For a representative claim, see Michael Carter, "Contradiction and Correspondence: Analysis of the Relation of Schooling to Work," in *The Limits of Educational Reform,* ed. Martin Carnoy and Henry Levin (New York: Longman, 1976), 78. For a characterization of the various Marxist positions on the question of validity, see Erik Olin Wright, *Class Crisis and the State* (London: Verso, 1979), chap. 1.

34. Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works,* vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 15.

35. Jurgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 310.

36. Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 75.

37. Ibid., 76.

> whom they are addressed, would freely agree to them. A critical theory addressed to the proletariat is confirmed, if its description of the objective situation of the proletariat in society is confirmed by normal observational means and if the members of the proletariat freely assent to the theory in particular to the views about freedom and coercion expressed in the theory.[38]

It is evident from Geuss's analysis that the validity of a critical theory depends on more than the empirical reliability of its causal claims, but it is also clear that an empirical assessment is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for the confirmation or falsification of a theory.

Given that a Marxist explanation entails knowledge claims about the world and as such requires empirical assessment, the question remains whether the Marxist value of freedom and the belief that capitalism restricts that freedom should affect such empirical assessments. Here my argument will be blunt and quite simple. I cannot foresee any plausible argument supporting the view that these Marxist tenets should play a role in the empirical assessment of explanatory claims. To maintain otherwise would be to enter into a solipsistic and relativistic cognitive world where whatever researchers assert, they confirm. This would certainly be a sad state of affairs, one which would leave any hope for emancipation dashed on the rocks of cognitive despair.

An example of the type of empirical test I have in mind may help clarify my proposal. Radicals claim that the public school curriculum represents a selective tradition, a tradition whereby the dominant class creates and recreates the conditions for their privileged position.[39] Now Marxists may sincerely believe that a selective tradition operates in the public school curricula in ways to reproduce capitalist social relations, but an assessment of these propositions must be made independent of any sincere beliefs. In brief, it must be shown (1) that the public school curriculum represents a selective tradition and (2) that this selected curriculum persists because it is conducive to capitalism. If the radical penchant for freedom and devaluing capitalism clouds this assessment, then it is difficult to know the role of curricula and the public schools in a capitalist society. Whereas it seems that these normative appeals should not influence the assessments of causal claims, it does seem plausible to construct additional "tests" which emphasize criteria for what constitutes meaningful action. If radical theorists want to extend the validity of their explanations beyond the required accountability for causal adequacy, I see no reason to argue against such a move.

There are, to be sure, numerous other complications that arise when a consideration of the issues surrounding normative beliefs and explanatory investigations are broached. Here, however, I wanted to argue that in Marxist investigations of curricula, the Marxist value commitment reasonably affects the direction and scope of explanations, but that these values should not intrude in an assessment of the explanatory claims.

PRESCRIPTIVE STATEMENTS

Marxists not only offer explanations and appraisals of schools and curricula but also prescribe changes for the public schools. Marxists propose explanations, proffer appraisals, and present prescriptions. In the previous section I discussed how the Marxist fusion of fact and value affected explanatory studies of curricula. As indicated earlier, the fact-value synthesis entails two beliefs: (1) men and women are such that in order to be human they must be free; and (2) capitalism unduly restricts people's freedom. As a result of these premises, Marxists value freedom and devalue capitalism. This dual evaluation guides and informs not only what Marxists explain but what they believe ought to be changed. Marxists attempt to explain how schools and their curricula restrict the development of freedom, and they envision schools as places where the development of freedom is a reasonable and feasible goal. In this final section I will examine how the Marxist propositions about freedom affect educational and curricular

38. Ibid., 38.
39. Liston, "Have We Explained the Relationship?"

prescriptions. I will examine briefly the justification of radical curricular prescriptions and the problems entailed by the Marxist concern for freedom.

Although radicals issue prescriptive pronouncements, very little attention has been given to how their values guide and justify calls for the transformation of public schools. Considerations over what sort of ethical procedure should be employed and how the various criteria should be weighed are absent.[40] Instead what seems prominent are attempts to derive prescriptions from descriptive and explanatory statements. Such derivations are not sound. Prescriptions for action cannot be derived from knowledge claims. In addition to the issue of justification there is a need to examine the conceptual and empirical problems posed by the Marxist concern for freedom. Marxists must examine the educational implications of their definition of freedom and confront the natural dependency of the child.

Although there is some talk of the distinct demands of ethical justification in Marxist analyses of schools and curricula, it is for the most part infrequent and not sustained.[41] Instead what occurs are prescriptions which are justified by the "facts." Marxists make broad claims about the pernicious state of schooling and capitalism, note the facts, and then launch into prescriptions for curricular and pedagogical changes. In the radical literature it is not uncommon to find critiques of schooling followed by suggested, but unexamined, prescriptions. Both Henry Giroux and Jean Anyon criticize schools, but neither examines the ethical basis for his or her critique, nor offers a justification for the suggested alternative. Instead both Giroux and Anyon justify their proposed educational programs through appeals to the "facts."

Henry Giroux proposes a plan for radical pedagogy and constructs a justification for this pedagogy and curricula through a description of the dialectics of social change.[42] Reacting to deterministic or reductionistic theories of social change, Giroux asserts that the world changes "dialectically." This assessment that the world changes dialectically is, for Giroux, a source of hope. If the explanation of social change is deterministic, there is no hope. However, if this reality can be explained dialectically, there is hope. This "inference" from an empirical assertion to a belief forms the ultimate basis for Giroux's proposal for a radical pedagogy, a pedagogy which "educates" politically radical activists. With this hope we are now allowed to see schools as an active force in the dialectic of social change. The justification for this program of radical pedagogy is an empirical assertion about social change. It seems that Giroux's argument is lacking essential ethical justification. "Educating" radical activists in the public schools cannot be justified by a notion of dialectical social change. If this is not evident now, it should soon become so.

Jean Anyon elaborates a theoretical model of "nonreproductive" education. According to Anyon, this model "incorporates notions of contradictory or dual social consciousness, a dialectical view of social change and a set of situated (class-specific), transformative pedagogies."[43] Similar to Giroux's approach, Anyon's justification for educational activity ignores the ethical dimension. It assumes that if people's social consciousness is contradictory and the process of social change is dialectical, then certain pedagogical interventions are "justified." She has written:

> It seems to me that we are today at a particular historical juncture in which the dialectic between cultural activity and economic change is particularly acute. Capitalism is becoming increasingly unmanageable and increasingly difficult to rationalize ideologically. Because of the material and legitimation

40. By ethical procedures I mean the way in which ethical decisions are made. Within the formal study of ethics a number of procedures have been outlined (e.g., utilitarian, emotivist, and intrinsic approaches).

41. Apple examines this issue briefly. See Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum,* 8-13.

42. The following paragraph is a synopsis of Giroux's position as outlined in Henry Giroux, "Hegemony, Resistance and the Paradox of Educational Reform," *Interchange* 12, nos. 2-3 (1981).

43. Jean Anyon, "Elementary Schooling and Distinction of Social Class," *Interchange* 12, nos. 2-3 (1981): 126.

> crises, popular ideological equivocation or opposition is likely. Rejection can take many forms however. . . . It is within this possibility of radically different alternatives that appropriate politicized cultural work is needed — to make a crucial difference. One way that educators can make a contribution to such work is through a socially-situated, class-specific, politicizing education.[44]

A class-specific, political education is justified by the claim of an acute, emerging contradiction between the cultural and economic spheres of society. Anyon employs an interpretation of societal change to justify her educational program.

Both Giroux and Anyon have prescribed educational programs. They are suggesting to others what educational actions ought to be taken. In order to justify an educational prescription, one must consider its ethical implications. In effect, it is incumbent upon these authors to tell us why we ought to engage in a plan of "radical pedagogy" or a "class-specific educational program." Talk about the social, political, or economic realities of schooling does not provide the ethical reasoning necessary to justify radical or class-based educational programs. Descriptions of schools and their curricula or explanations linking schools to capitalism cannot justify programs of educational and political action. Empirical appraisals may indicate consequences, but such empirical assessments cannot provide the moral legitimacy for proposed educational programs. In order to justify educational activities, one must begin to assess the program's goals and the proposed means to achieving those goals.[45]

It might be argued that Marx's naturalist ethic provides the basis for the justification of radical educational proposals. The naturalist premise conjoins factual and evaluative elements when it states that since people are human only when they are free, people ought to be free. According to this line of reasoning, the naturalist admixture of factual and evaluative claims furnishes the ethical foundation for radical educational programs. Such a claim misconstrues the scope of Marx's "synthesis" of fact and value. As noted earlier, Marx's naturalist ethic grounds the value of freedom and the subsequent condemnation of capitalism. However, this naturalist ethic cannot identify which actions are freedom-producing actions, nor does it outline a general procedure to distinguish which actions ought to be pursued. The Marxist naturalist premise cannot be extended to a generalized proposition which states that "facts justify human choices." The naturalist premise is specific to and justifies only the Marxist value for freedom. Even with the naturalist ethic in hand, we don't know whether (1) we intuit which curricular proposals are freedom-developing courses of action; (2) we measure the probable consequences of certain educational programs and thereby determine which proposal to follow; or (3) we believe that certain educational activities are intrinsically related to concerns for freedom and should be undertaken regardless of the consequences. In short, the naturalist premise furnishes the foundation for the value of freedom but not a general procedure for deciding which educational actions and designs are most promising.

If one turns to Marx's own writings or the secondary literature on Marxism and ethics to discern what justificatory schemas are contained within or compatible with a Marxist framework, little agreement is found. While it appears evident to most that Marx condemned capitalism for its restriction of freedom, it is not clear whether or how Marx justified his appeals for political and social action. Some argue that Marx did not but should have offered a justificatory schema and point to Marx's inconsis-

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44. Ibid., 132.

45. Giroux and Anyon do not provide substantial justifications for their educational proposals. One could argue that it was neither Giroux's nor Anyon's task to justify their programs ethically. Their task was simply to provide and describe additional educational avenues. They achieved that goal. According to this line of reasoning, my critique of Giroux and Anyon is like damning the letter carrier for not bringing the mail to my study, sorting the letters on my desk, discarding the "junk" mail, and paying the bills. There may be some truth to this response. Nevertheless, it should be evident that such justifications are sorely needed.

tencies.[46] Others argue that Marx's ethical calculus is similar to the utilitarians'. According to this view, Marx justified political action to the degree that it hastened the arrival of socialism, thereby providing the greatest amount of satisfaction.[47] Still others argue that Marx was a nonutilitarian consequentialist, one who utilized a number of distinct criteria to assess the consequences of various actions.[48] The merits of each interpretation cannot be weighed here. The point, however, should be clear. If Marxists continue to argue for curricular changes in the public school, more attention should be given to how such changes are justified.

Not only do the justificatory procedures require further examination, but also the concepts and criteria employed in these justifications are in need of inspection. Earlier I attempted to define the Marxist conception of freedom and noted some potential difficulties. In what remains of this section I will underline a few of these key issues. Specifically, problems revolve around identifying which desires, talents, and capacities enhance the student's ability for self-determination and what role the curriculum plays in this process.

The Marxist conception of freedom stipulates that if men and women are to achieve self-determination, they must identify their own desires, capacities, and talents. Difficulties arise with this formulation when it is pushed further and placed in an educational context. Which desires and talents are conducive to self-determination? Within the schools, who is to decide which desires and talents should be pursued? What is the role of the curriculum in the development of this freedom? These are a few of the questions that must be confronted.

Since a rigid adherence to certain desires can fetter the development of freedom and acting on all desires and talents is simply unfeasible, it makes sense to search for or construct some general guidelines. Some guidance is needed to discern which desires and talents hold the potential for developing self-determination and which do not. If a student desires to spend a lot of time in front of a video display terminal, is this conducive to the development of his or her freedom? If a student hates math but loves to read natural history, does an emphasis on self-determination suggest that the child be allowed a sustained focus on natural history? Marx's theory of freedom is unable to help us here since it does not discern which educational activities are conducive to a child's freedom. Also the difficulty of determining who should decide which desires and talents ought to be pursued and how that decision is made must be confronted. Given the natural (biological and cultural) dependency of the child, what role do teachers play in the development of a child's freedom? Are decisions made in a collaborative manner, or is it assumed that the child is incapable of such collaboration? Again, Marx's theory of freedom does not help here. Further consideration needs to be given to the child's dependent nature and the process of decision making.

Furthermore, the role of knowledge in this self-determination must be addressed. Is there any knowledge that is essential for the development of a child's freedom? As noted earlier, a Marxist would claim that it is important to be able to discern which social and natural relations are amenable to human alteration and direction. Presumably Marxist investigations identify which relations are alterable. Is it feasible to expect that Marxist social science can become part of the public school curricula? These are all reasonable questions and, in fact, address perennial educational dilemmas. These problems are not new, and the Marxist framework is simply not equipped to address all of them. It is at this point that those within this tradition must borrow from other traditions.

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46. Eugene Kamenka argues this in his *The Ethical Foundations of Marxism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), and his *Marxism and Ethics* (London: Macmillan, 1970).

47. This general position is represented by Derek Allen in his "The Utilitarianism of Marx and Engels," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (1973), and "Reply to Brenkert's 'Marx and Utilitarianism,' " *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 3 (1976).

48. This position is argued by Richard Miller. See Richard Miller, "Marx and Aristotle: A Kind of Consequentialism," in *Marx and Morality,* ed. Kai Nielson and Steven Patten (Guelph, Ontario: Canadian Association for Publishing in Philosophy, 1981), 323-53, and his *Analyzing Marx,* 15-100.

SUMMARY

It is possible, within the Marxist tradition, to formulate a particular resolution to the fact-value dichotomy. According to this tradition, human beings are such that in order to be human they must be free. This resolution conjoins rather abstract factual and evaluative claims about human nature. We, in the radical tradition, now need to confront more specific questions concerning how this conjunction affects prescriptive and explanatory analyses of curricula and education. Here I have argued that the Marxist value for freedom and devaluation of capitalism should affect the explanatory focus of radical studies but not an assessment of an explanation's adequacy. Furthermore, I have argued that the Marxist notion of freedom, while highly suggestive, is incapable of confronting basic educational and programmatic questions. Those of us in the radical tradition must begin to examine the ethical justification for our educational programs and confront the problems posed by the value of freedom.[49] We must also recognize the limited but important role these values play in explanatory studies of curricula.

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49. One final note should be raised. In this article I have argued that Marx was a formidable critic of justice-based critiques and that he relied, in his own formulations, on a value of freedom. While I believe the Marxist critique of justice is valuable, I do not believe it sufficiently undermines the values of justice or equality. These values require further inspection. I cannot do that here, but I would like to suggest a starting point for future consideration. If the radical premise is that in order to be human men and women must be free, I would add that in order to be human and free, men and women must live under conditions of basic equality. Freedom and justice (as equality) need not be, as is frequently supposed, mutually antagonistic values. It may be that a radical egalitarian position best suits the radical critique and vision. While I'm not quite sure where this would lead us, I do think it is a position worth exploring.

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