

Education as an end in itself is the clarion call of the liberal arts. The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake must hold some appeal for anyone who takes teaching seriously both as an intrinsic good and as contributing to the sort of well-roundedness said to prepare citizens for democratic participation.<sup>1</sup> Yet what persistently places the in-itself/for-itself claim at risk is the presence of commodity labor, either as the ends of education or as its means. It is worth remembering that the arguments for autonomy that provided the foundational idea of the Western university in the nineteenth century were made against the subordination of learning to labor, either as apprenticeship in a guild or as an occupational response to religious calling. Today, as the market appears to have stolen education's innocence in the form of the preponderance of professional training, it is tempting to see what might look like a one-hundred-year interregnum of the liberal arts as a golden age and not a historical aberration. During this time, the liberal ideal was already challenged by the model of the research university, where education was to serve the advancement of knowledge as a kind of global mastery; the multiversity, a conglomerate of interests whose chief practitioners, after University of California President Clark Kerr, were administrators; and the corporate university, whose intellectual properties were meant to fetch a good price.<sup>2</sup>

When one moves from ideals to demographics, it is hard to argue for a return to the glory days of, say, 1869, when, for example, in the United States, 563 institutions graduated fewer than 10,000 baccalaureates, at a ratio of nearly eight privileged men to every woman, and where proportionately, men were more than twice as likely to earn a degree. By 2001, over 15 million students were enrolled in more than 4,000 U.S. institutions of higher education, over half of whom were women, and a million and a quarter bachelor's degrees were awarded.<sup>3</sup> As professional services came to define the job market, the very character of the degree shifted. In 1970, bachelor's degrees in the liberal arts were still approaching half of the total (at 46 percent). Thirty years later, the number had fallen to 35 percent. Degrees in business increased the most (from 114,729 to 265,746 between 1970 and 2000), and those in education suffered the greatest decline (from 176,307 to 105,556). Literature, mathematics, physical sci-

ence, social science, and history all graduate fewer students than they did thirty years ago (although the social sciences and history have recouped much of the lost ground).<sup>4</sup> MBAs comprise nearly a quarter of the master's degrees awarded, and more professional degrees (MDs, JDs, etc.) are granted than PhDs. Even the growth in doctorates—which has reached a plateau in the past decade—reflects the preponderance of PhDs with professional applications such as education (which at the doctoral level has fluctuated but was still higher in 2000 than it was in 1970), engineering, psychology, and the life sciences, which are the fields in which the greatest number of degrees are awarded.<sup>5</sup> Whatever the (re)turn to professionalism means in higher education, these few figures indicate that it is here to stay.

Like any good nostalgia, the warmth toward a university free of the market invents a past to claim a normative present. The activation of academic labor, closely intertwined with a labor and disciplinary crisis in the humanities, imagined a past where securing a job was unproblematic and a curriculum that was given as a received tradition. At issue is not simply the accuracy of these histories, but the scope of political desire unleashed by academic labor movements. To the extent that they are framed within the craft ambitions of job security, they aspire to a model of professional autonomy and control over the labor market that is already behind us. To insist that academic labor movements are about the production of knowledge for others, to recast the modernist values of autonomous spheres, is to rethink the politics of professionalization as a grounds for using expert knowledge to transcend the limitations of specialized interest. We are in an ironic situation where the remnants of the self-organized proletariat in the form of trade unions are treated as a special interest. If professional education is now doing to labor what industrialization did over a century ago, the more general interest in the activism of the university and the professions will need to be rethought. Against the claims of self-privilege, movements that make explicit the political efficacy of professional labor and knowledge will need to aim their sights at the possibilities for redirecting the governing ideas of the era. This special dossier of *Social Text* is meant to turn our attention to the lessons of professional education, at once as an epistemological formulation, a way for education to set labor in motion, and a global model of socioeconomic development.

Proprietary schools, which have flourished in the past two decades under the sign of privatization of social goods, reaching over eight hundred by 2001, would seem to embody the ultimate negation of liberal arts in favor of fullest commodification.<sup>6</sup> The dean of neoliberal studies, Milton Friedman, prefers to parse the distinction between for-profits and non-profits as taxpaying and tax-exempt, which translates into 40 percent of

revenues for proprietaries having to be set aside for taxes and 50 percent of costs for public universities covered through tax subsidies.<sup>7</sup> This distinction is meant to award the prize of rationality to the profiteers—whatever needs don't make it into the calculus are outside market reason. Since profits derive solely from tuition revenue, lean administrators do no fundraising and answer to their investors. Employees are not stakeholders in governance but literally stockholders whose retirements are tied to their own job performances. The dean of DeVry University, Richard S. Ruch, is more forthright about the limits to faculty governance than most of his counterparts at nonprofits are willing to be. "In my experience, the management strategy of the for-profits is to allow enough shared governance to appease regional accreditation visiting teams and keep the faculty from unionizing."<sup>8</sup> But at root, these educational "companies are managed conservatively according to tried-and-true methods of supervision."<sup>9</sup> Tenure is out, and the "curriculum is managed centrally by professional curriculum specialists," leaving faculty as the "delivery people."<sup>10</sup>

The profit-taking epiphany for John Sperling, the founder of the notorious University of Phoenix—which now claims to enroll 200,000 students—comes from being voted out of office in a faculty union he himself had organized. "That experience cured me of my socialist sentiments in favor of nonprofits. I correctly perceived that the only sure way to maintain and enjoy the fruits of my labor was to create a venture I could control."<sup>11</sup> Democracy had cured him of socialism, trade unionism had made him proprietary, and the delivery people yielded him a company with a market value in the billions. As a business, Phoenix and its ilk have common enough motives. Their strategy has been to expand the reach of education to those older than twenty-five, who now comprise half of the students in higher education. The business model has been not to prepare or protect or warehouse workers-to-be but to embed education in the labor force as labor's own medium of circulation. Education is to be the downsizable professional's constant companion, a way to anticipate imminent departure through perpetual retooling. This becomes apparent with respect to adult education. The last available figures are for 1999, when over 86 million adults were enrolled in some kind of course. Total enrollment in nondegree classes and programs had increased over 10 million from just four years earlier (1995).<sup>12</sup>

Adult education had its start after World War I as a civic rather than vocational project meant to heal the rift between expert and lay knowledge and combat communist appeals at home and abroad.<sup>13</sup> Today, clearly it is the reverse. Adult education is not a substitute for college work; rather, participation rates increase with educational attainment (with the exception of the doctorate), starting with just under 15 percent for those with

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an eighth-grade education or less and reaching nearly three-quarters of those with professional degrees.<sup>14</sup> Professionals maintain competence and a monopoly over expertise through licensure programs.<sup>15</sup> One could also argue that adult education is not simply a supplement to college, but the medium through which professional labor maintains its mobility. Professionals are not simply credentialed (or recredentialed) through education, but professionalized education is the means through which careers are managed in the face of a full range of disruptions, from downsizing of managerial jobs to implosions of industries. Education, in this light, is the material of occupational self-management, making the paeans to lifelong learning a necessary palliative to the insecurities of the professional world and the mounting infidelities of its labor market. No small wonder that distance-learning models have failed as a substitute for traditional college-age students but have enjoyed some success among salaried professionals already oriented toward disciplining their domestic time and space with the attentions and distractions of the monitored workplace.<sup>16</sup> The for-profits have another interest in distance learning: it is seen as an instrument of deregulation that would replace regional accreditation entities, which support nonprofits public and private, with a national authority capable of funneling federal student aid directly into profit-making coffers.<sup>17</sup> So much for the tax-benefit arguments.

A century ago, professional education in such fields as medicine, law, and social work was formed as an autonomous entity in a tussle with proprietary versions of licensing and training. Flexner's axioms for monopolizing access to professional jobs by dint of command over expert knowledge were that it be intellectual, learned, practical, technical, self-organized, and altruistic.<sup>18</sup> Today, we could say that the reassertion of the proprietary school is not simply a return of the repressed but a full realization of the encounter between professionalization and proletarianization. While professionals are increasingly dispossessed of self-sufficiency in bringing their expertise to market, the model of self-management, derived from a professional ethos and assertion, now comes to characterize labor itself. The lives of both students and faculty are retooled along these lines. Above all, professional education celebrates the wisdom of the marketplace in setting the terms of this articulation. At the same time, the practical and instrumental orientation of professionalism speaks to the full subsumption of knowledge to production where cultural skepticism about the disinterestedness of technical reason meets self-doubt that furthering expertise can still be an end in itself.

In politics this dizzy situation gives us Bushes and Schwarzeneggers. In the professions themselves, it can simply mean business. But business, like politics, leaves a tale of betrayal that more and more have been trained

to understand. For those reared on the altruism of professional self-interest—be true to your disciplinary expertise and reap the rewards of labor monopoly—it’s now Faust or famine. The particular competences, the power of expert specificities, are substituted for the generic logic of the market—do what is best for the bottom line. Now the physicians running a hospital need to know what the accountants advising an energy conglomerate need to know. This is not a problem reducible to educational reform, but it is one that becomes legible in the study of professional education.

Professional socialization is not confined to higher education, but could be taken as the means and ends of educational rationality. Jeff Schmidt, noting that only 5 percent of professors consider themselves as leftists outside the liberal-conservative mainstream, argues that professional qualification entails not simply technical knowledge but an “attitude toward working within an assigned political and ideological framework,” for which standardized tests such as the Graduate Record Examination or the Law School Admission Test both measure and train students.<sup>19</sup> The hidden curriculum that promotes such obedience accounts for the timidity of highly educated employees. But after such Bushian legislative initiatives as the Leave No Child Behind Act,<sup>20</sup> testing is not reserved for entrance to advanced study but is also the road that leads to it. For that half of the secondary-school population that will not be attending college, those students are nonetheless invited to view their futures according to a professional yardstick, even as they may offer resistance or some fabulist counterlegislation like Leave This Child Alone.

The celebration of standardization in the curriculum would seem to speak more to the industrialization of the professional strata than to the orientation of all students toward the norms of autonomous expertise. Test prep brings the future into the present, a never-ending anticipation of judgment day that norms behavior toward the mean. Surely this is a rear-guard action against any claims for due consideration based upon historical discrimination, as all are subjected to the same standard that aligns aptitude and attitude. Sorting can now proceed on the merits of individual competence subject to measurable standards. A clever scheme this, to affirm social divisions while banishing the language that would allow us to speak of them.

The generalization of these educational protocols also allows the minority professional strata to speak for the multitudes and may hint at how public opinion is mobilized toward narrowly interested tax policies and social disinvestment. But it also suggests that there is public appeal behind what once would have been dubbed special interests but now stand for all those capable of having one. In short, professional education has

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now become attached to a much larger social base where the accomplishments of professional society are akin to the wealth of the nation. Whether dubious premise or false promise, the associated professional also offers a voice of opportunity to address the gap between the lost myths of free pursuit of self-development and the capacity to evaluate what fruits still need to be borne by the sticky preparations of educational socialization.

Stanley Aronowitz's contribution to this dossier offers a fulsome account of the appropriation of educational promise to schooling, which aims to teach students to learn to live to work. His historical insights about the very different educational projects associated with the labor movement provide a counterpoint to the present demands that laboring be only the ends of stratified instruction. For this to happen, teachers would need to reclaim their professional grounds as intellectual labor and reassert their organizational means to make a political intervention. The relation between professional self-concept and political project is taken up by Christopher Newfield in his refashioning of the self-fulfilling prophecy that the humanities purposes have been eclipsed by neoliberal ideology. If commerce has always been part of education, better strategies for negotiating that already contested and permeable ground need to be found. Newfield reads new university ideologies to show how the imperatives of intellectual property for monopoly capitalism can be countered with the creation of a knowledge commons for human development.

A case study of this abdication to putative market dicta can be found in Tony Tinker's treatment of business schools' gutting of accounting curriculum to satisfy demands for more efficient training. The result was to precipitate the market failure made famous by the likes of Enron and World-Com, whose auditors lacked the practical competencies needed to save their clients from their own malfeasance. This is also a study of how ideas promulgated by professional academics have tangible worldly effects, a cautionary tale indeed to those who would dismiss the efficacy of such knowledge. It is important to retain the internal difference attendant upon professional education even within business education.

While professionalization has been said to produce a new global elite and the professional courses of study may enjoy some national variation, the pleasure is not equally shared.<sup>21</sup> If the liberal arts produced area studies as a Cold War educational front, the professional school model followed within a decade with a generous Ford Foundation grant in 1967, which convened a conference with participants from fifty-two nations aimed at internationalizing the American model.<sup>22</sup> Today those endeavors have merged nicely with privatized online educational initiatives such as Universitas 21, the partnership between publishing giant Thomson and seventeen research universities in ten countries to create an MBA program

aimed at attracting students in China and other Asian Pacific nations.<sup>23</sup> The contribution here of Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis looks at the struggle taking place within the postindependence African university against the formation of professional elites trained to do the bidding of neoliberal structural adjustment policies. Run by expatriate internationalizing academics, a new cluster of programs aims to downgrade the projects for national development organized through university departments. Federici and Caffentzis's analysis shows how ever-popular scholarly exchange and study abroad programs are implicated in this version of globalization.

The ambition of labor relations in higher education is to make everyone a manager. It is the conviction of many private universities that beyond the formal sanctions of the Yeshiva decision, which found tenured faculty to be managerial employees, institutional governance will inoculate them from further unionization. *Social Text* has, over several issues, monitored the fate of these claims and explored how managerialist protocols are precipitates for labor activity whether in the case of graduate student workers or of "casualized" part-time faculty whose ranks have swelled with increased enrollments. To this would need to be added the study of the new casualization of full-time faculty positions in the form of proliferating nontenure appointments intended to secure managerial rights without a permanent place at the table. If testing brings the educated masses into the professional fold regardless of their occupational trajectory, evaluation and review are the cognates for academic professionals. Whether or not professors teach to the test, their teaching will be measured and made tangible through a matrix of course evaluations, reappointment reviews, merit appraisals, post-tenure tests, and merit exercises. Test culture and its appeals to normalization continue. Much deserved attention has been paid to the notion of affective labor, which has both professional and informal expression. While not on the topic of professional education, Sara Ahmed's rethinking of emotional work also appears in this issue as a counterpoint, although her discussion of how bodily and social spaces are aligned through economies of hate and fear stands on its own. Nonetheless, academic work is not only affective labor, for self-planned professionals must adopt the outlooks of the institutional mission as their own.

More than a presentation of self, mission control is an affiliation of faith that *your U is you*. By this reckoning all are called upon to be in the midst of management, to think of themselves as advancing a corporate interest, and to articulate their needs and contributions in terms of this larger social good. Gone are the days when the value of education or of expertise can be taken for granted. The skepticism of metanarratives is pervasive, but it takes the form of suspicion toward the utility of particu-

lar expertise. Each is called upon to justify its place, all are in a position to judge. This does not expunge professional expertise, but sets it in motion, denies it fixity, allows for its further institutionalization. Just as more people reside in the medium of education, there is more professional labor and more institutional location in which it operates. Professional labor must produce more than exchange value: it needs to provide the proof of its worth.

So education is not exactly an end in itself. And the liberal arts have, in many respects, turned pro. Yet that does not evacuate its public project. Rather, the nature of that project and the terms of its intervention cannot be given by the fact of institutional location within the university or by the immanent truth of pursuing knowledge as such. Professionalization forces articulation upon its politics. Legitimation for educational endeavors must be found in some worldly purpose or authority. Once it seemed that the professional mandate meant that market demands could provide sufficient external justification for further education. But subordination to the market opened up the risk of market failure and verified that if winner-take-all were to be treated as the voice of reason, its speech could quickly be reduced to babble. In practice, such schemas dictate that losing is the more common experience than winning, and the losers may have far more insight into the whole process than the winners ever did. While no one subjected to professional standards may be left unmeasured or unjudged, many are left behind. The disjunction between the assimilation of a general ethos and mass expulsion from the winner's circle must itself be managed. This vast domain of exclusion produced by the insistence upon assimilation is what Fred Moten and Stefano Harney refer to as the Undercommons. What the machine spits out is far greater than what it wants to digest. Unlike the quaky voice of the market whose winning ways are only discernible after the fact, the voices of critique and subversion make quite a din. The anxieties expressed by the conservators of the university that those minor keys at the margins may threaten to overwhelm them speaks less to the disingenuousness of those who hold institutional strings than to the potency of ideas that express nonmarket externalities to grasp the world as such.

The essays gathered here provide a critique of professionalization from the perspective of critically engaged professional knowledge and, on that basis, offer a prospect of comparative activism to emerge from turning pro. A braiding of Deweyan traditions of democratic education and labor activism among teaching professionals informs Stanley Aronowitz's call to retain utopian possibilities against the larger assault of technocratic instrumentalism. Christopher Newfield is asking humanists to treat themselves as professional specialists with an entrepreneurial interest

in challenging the unspoken universalism of nostalgic humanism. Organizations of critical professionals that draw upon their expertise and the imprimatur of university-based associations to critique complicity in market-driven destructiveness are vital to the advocacy positions in the articles by Tony Tinker and by Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis. As an accountant, Tinker is no less critical of the limits to that educational obsequiousness to the market than toward business schools, but he recognizes the need to leverage his own position in a more public-interest-based political front. Hence his affiliation with the Association for Integrity in Accounting, a group with links to Ralph Nader's Citizen Works. The Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa, of which Federici and Caffentzis are members, has promulgated a code of professional academic ethics in the form of targeted solidarity that draws upon specific multilateral relations among institutions, faculty, and funding agencies. Finally, Moten and Harney treat the Undercommons as a source of activism that embraces the whole range of disciplinary and postdisciplinary formations to grow from the struggles over what counts as knowledge. Together these activisms point beyond a straightforward narrative of normalization, assimilation, and control to a renewed sense of how the university—now not only porous but in continuous circulation with its world—can matter to the larger prospect of refashioning public understanding. Paradoxically, the professionals' founding claim to have risen above politics has only ushered in the proliferation of the political. It is not enough to say that the professions have become dispirited (Weber's argument from the turn of the prior century) or that—their ennobling purpose lost—they lie in ruins. People's professions could take out franchises from the popular science movement. Sorting out the politics we can live by—one informed by what knowledge is for, how it affiliates, where it applies, what world it would create—will, of necessity, become the new professional creed.

## Notes

1. With respect to the privileged citizen-subject entitled to participation, the universalist aspirations of the liberal arts help naturalize a particular national identity. See, for example, Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); David Lloyd and Paul Thomas, *Culture and the State* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

2. The relevant texts here are John Henry Newman's *Idea of the University*, originally published in 1852; Abraham Flexner's formulation of research-based professional education, *Medical Education in the United States and Canada* (Boston: Updyke, Merrymount Press, 1910); Clark Kerr's *Uses of the University*, 4th ed. (1963; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); and Sheila Slaugh-

ter and Larry Leslie's *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

3. Data on Degree-Granting Postsecondary Enrollment, Table 171, "Historical Summary of Faculty, Students, Degrees, and Finances in Degree-Granting Institutions: 1869-70 to 1999-2000," *Digest of Education Statistics, 2002* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics), 205.

4. The numbers for professional and liberal arts degrees are based on my own aggregation of categories in Table 252, "Bachelor's Degrees Conferred by Degree-Granting Institutions, by Discipline Division: 1970-71 to 2000-2001," *Digest of Education Statistics, 2002*, 304.

5. Table 254, "Doctor's Degrees Conferred by Degree-Granting Institutions, by Discipline Division: 1970-71 to 2000-2001," *Digest of Education Statistics, 2002*, 306.

6. "College Enrollment Trends," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 20 August 2003, 2.

7. Figures from the confessional of a dean at DeVry University, in *Higher Ed, Inc.: The Rise of the For-Profit University*, by Richard S. Ruch (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 11. The account that follows is based upon Ruch's description of DeVry.

8. *Ibid.*, 14.

9. *Ibid.*, 15.

10. *Ibid.*, 112, 118.

11. John Sperling, *Rebel with a Cause: The Entrepreneur Who Created the University of Phoenix and the For-Profit Revolution in Higher Education* (New York: John Wiley, 2000), 2.

12. Table 360, "Participation in adult education during the previous 12 months by adults 17 years old and older, by selected characteristics of participants: 1991, 1995, and 1999," *Digest of Education Statistics, 2002*, 404.

13. See Harold W. Stubblefield, *Towards a History of Adult Education in America: The Search for a Unifying Principle* (London: Croom Helm, 1988); and Harold W. Stubblefield and Patrick Keane, *Adult Education in the American Experience: From the Colonial Period to the Present* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994) for historical accounts of this shift.

14. Table 360, *Digest*.

15. This is the reckoning of those who run such programs. See, for example, the book edited by the former dean of the extension program at the University of California, Berkeley, Milton R. Stern, *Power and Conflict in Continuing Professional Education* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1983).

16. The American Association of University Professors journal, *Academe*, published several useful articles in 2002 tracking the precipitous rise and fall of distance learning between 1998 and 2002. The closing of initiatives was reported in the section "Nota Bene," 2, 6-7.

17. This rationale for advancing distance education is laid out by Sperling himself in John Sperling and Robert W. Tucker, *For-Profit Higher Education: Developing a World Class Workforce* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1997), 70-77.

18. For overviews of this history, see William J. McGlothlin, *The Professional Schools* (New York: Center for Applied Research in Education, 1964), which provides the Flexnerian code; Solomon Hoberman and Sidney Mailick, eds., *Professional Education in the United States: Experiential Learning, Issues, and Prospects*

(Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1994); and Sinclair Goodlad, ed., *Education for the Professions* (Surrey, U.K.: Society for Research into Higher Education, 1984) for curricular and institutional developments.

19. Jeff Schmidt, *Disciplined Minds: A Critical Look at Salaried Professionals and the Soul-Battering System That Shapes Their Lives* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 16.

20. Passed in 2001, and at the time considered by George W. Bush the “cornerstone” of his administration, the watchword of the law is accountability. Testing is its means. “Under the act’s accountability provisions, states must describe how they will close the achievement gap and make sure all students, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve academic proficiency. They must produce annual state and school district report cards that inform parents and communities about state and school progress. Schools that do not make progress must provide supplemental services, such as free tutoring or after-school assistance; take corrective actions; and, if still not making adequate yearly progress after five years, make dramatic changes to the way the school is run.” U.S. Department of Education Web site, “Overview: No Child Left Behind,” [www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/schools/edpicks.jhtml](http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/schools/edpicks.jhtml) (accessed October 2003).

21. See Harold Perkin, *The Third Revolution: Professional Elites in the Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1996).

22. For documentation of these meetings and the thinking they produced, see *Internationalizing the U.S. Professional School* (New York: Education and World Affairs, 1969).

23. Florence Olsen, “Universitas 21 and Thomson Open Online M.B.A. Program,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 26 September 2003, A48.

