Abstract

A prominent feature of Marx's programme for education is the combination of schooling with work for the child. The reasons for his plan are both theoretical and practical. Marx regards labour as essential to human development; he rejects the claim of progressive education that 'play is the work of the child'. On the practical side, Marx uses the factory school as his model, not forseeing its replacement by full-time schooling.

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Work, Play and School in Marx's Views on Education

The relation between school and work has been a recurring topic of debate in educational theory, but nowhere more so than from Marx's standpoint. The choice is understandable, given the general orientation of this approach to the problems of education. As a theory of human development, it emphasizes the importance of labour in the formation of society and of the individual person. As a programme for reform in education, it directs its attention towards the needs of the class in modern society for which labour is the main task in life. In the writings of Marx himself we can find attempts to present the theme of school and work from both the theoretical and practical point of view. But this is only the beginning: in each case there are complexities which rule out any simple assessment of his claims. In the following discussion I shall attempt to outline these complexities and provide an analysis of the ideas which underly Marx's plan for an education in which school and work both find a place in the life of the child.

Six arguments for child labour

A text of importance here is the resolution which Marx drafted for the first Congress of the International Workingmen's Association, held in Geneva in 1866. Although its heading reads "Juvenile and Children's Labour (Both Sexes)", this resolution is also concerned with schooling. In it Marx puts forward a plan for child labour and education. He begins by stating the assumption of his policy: that children may be workers, but workers for whom attendance at a school will also be compulsory.

> We consider the tendency of modern industry to make children and juvenile persons of both sexes co-operate in the great work of social production, as a progressive, sound legitimate tendency, although under capital it was distorted into an abomination. In a rational state of society *every child whatever*, from the age of 9 years, ought to become a productive labourer in the same way that no able-bodied adult person ought to be exempted from the general law of nature, viz.: to work in order to be able to eat, and work not only with the brain but with the hands too.[1]

This passage provides a good starting-point for assessing Marx's programme for combining work with school. To do that however we must take into account his reasons for favouring this policy. At least six of these can be identified in his various writings on the subject. Starting with the passage just cited, we can identify:

(1) A *moral* argument: Marx argues that if adults ought to work in order to eat, the same rule must apply to children. He calls this "the general law of nature". Obviously the statement is not a

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'law of nature' of the kind described by physical science; it is after all a familiar fact that in most societies there are some people who consume but do not produce. Rather it is a moral principle which Marx calls a 'law of nature' because he takes it to have a universal validity, and perhaps also because he takes it to be somehow 'self-evident'.[2] There seems to be a close link between this theme and the principle which Marx said the society of the future would "inscribe on its banner: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!".[3] This too is a statement about duties and rights, or more generally, a principle of justice. It goes further than the simple statement that all those who consume should also engage in production; something is said by the formulation about both the nature and the extent of this contribution. It is not to be simply the same for everyone, nor simply to correspond to the needs, as shown in consumption, of each individual. The concept of individual ability is used to determine the demands placed upon each person. The assumption is presumably that talents and preferences vary more or less widely between individuals. Yet the principle is still one of equality, in that it asserts the applicability of the same relation between abilities and duties.

(2) An *economic* argument. Rebutting the Gotha programme's call for the abolition of child labour, Marx writes: "A general prohibition of child labour is incompatible with the existence of large-scale industry and hence an empty, pious wish".[4] Child labour is not of course claimed to be a part only of modern society; the traditional family had relied upon the labour of women and children within the home, where a division of labour by age and sex allocated various tasks in the livelihood of the family. Production by machinery, however, implies the elimination of such distinctions, because its operation involves tasks which call for no particular skill or strength. In the factory system, therefore, women and children could perform the same unskilled work as men. The economic consequence was that the individual wage could be reduced below the level necessary to support a whole family, and the process of capitalist accumulation could proceed all the faster. In the passage just cited Marx does not specify that capitalist industry alone requires child labour — nor however does he deny it. Marx does hold that in a socialist society children will engage in work; but it is not clear that the reasons for this will include an economic justification. In such a society an argument based upon the economic laws of wage-labour would presumably have no relevance. So if the moral argument for child labour is closely bound up with the idea of a classless society, the economic argument is instead a claim which assumes no basic change in the mode of production.

(3) An *educational* argument, which is best presented in a frequently quoted passage from *Capital:*

> As we can learn in detail from the study of the life work of Robert Owen, the germs of education of the future are to be found in the factory system. This will be an education which, in the case of every child over a certain age, will combine productive labour with instruction and physical culture, not only as a means for increasing social production, but as the only way of producing fully developed human beings.[5]

In this appeal to a traditional ideal — the humanist model of all-round development — Marx expresses one of his most central themes, the guiding thread in his criticisms of the division of labour from his early writings to his most mature works. It provides a model for the process of development as well as its final outcome, if indeed there is any such end state. The question is whether the development of the different aspects of personality can proceed in harmony, or whether one or more sides will be held back by circumstances. The task of education is determined by this continuing process — hence its need to take in the whole range of activities which contribute to personal development.

Marx also modifies the traditional humanist ideal in another way: by widening it to take in the activity of labour, regarded with deep suspicion by classical thinkers because of its apparent subordination of human purpose to the necessity of nature. The rehabilitation of the concept of

labour and its introduction into a programme for education had already been attempted by other writers and in particular by earlier socialists such as Fourier. At the same time, Marx had from his earliest period as a writer shown an attraction to the idea of human 'self-creation' by means of labour. It is not surprising that he should go on to present labour as an element of education, amongst other reasons as a plausible corollary to the use of humanist ideas in a socialist programme.

(4) An argument about *training* — that is, training in the abilities required for particular kinds of production. Marx cites with apparent approval the statement of an employer: "I am quite sure that the true secret of producing efficient workpeople is to be found in uniting education and labour from a period of childhood".[6] As Marx himself puts it, "One who has to work at a machine, has to be trained to it from early youth upwards, so that he can learn to adapt his own movements to the uniform and continuous motion of an automaton".[7] Here he seems to be describing a technical requirement of production by machinery and not a social requirement determined by its use in a capitalist system. All machinery, Marx argues, reduces labour to a few basic operations which need to be carried out in an efficient way. Because of "the quickness with which young people can learn to work at a machine"[8] these habits are best acquired in childhood. In this way child labour produces the kind of labour power required by machine production. It is true that Marx often lays emphasis on the *lack* of training involved in industrial production. Perhaps this is less an inconsistency than an ambiguity in the concept of 'training', however. Skill of traditional kinds is systematically eliminated in the transition from handicrafts to machinery; yet certain habits of attention and discipline become far more important. These are more like character traits than skills, but in both cases a form of training plays a part in the supply of labour power.

(5) A *political* argument, found in Marx's 'Critique of the Gotha Programme'. After describing the demand for the abolition of child labour as "an empty, pious wish", Marx goes on:

> Its realisation — if it were possible — would be reactionary, since, with a strict regulation of the working time according to the different age groups and other safety measures for the protection of children, an early combination of productive labour with education is one of the most potent means for the transformation of present-day society.[9]

Why does Marx make this assertion? Perhaps it is the other side of his insistence on the limited scope of the school curriculum. In commenting on a suggestion for the inclusion of instruction in 'the value of labour', Marx said: "it was a kind of education that the young must get from the adults in the everyday struggle of life".[10] It is plausible to read this remark as a reference to the experience of the workplace. Marx is speaking here of something like class consciousness, or at least an understanding of social relations and their significance. But if this consciousness is nothing but an expression of real life, it can be acquired only by the experiencing of class relations at first hand, and not by instruction in the classroom. It will be this kind of education that in turn leads to the transformation of society. Marx is not at all against political education. On the contrary, he removes it from the school only in order to locate it where it can take place in a more effective way, as a contribution to the growth of an organized and conscious working class, the agent of social revolution.

(6) A *tactical* argument: the claim that the combination of work and education is already in operation, and has proved itself to be a success. The underlying point is that Marx wants wherever possible to call upon existing tendencies rather than set up new policies or plans based only upon theory: "Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things". Again: "The theoretical conclusions of the communists . . . merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes".[12] For this reason a communist programme for education could not

exist unless 'the germs of the education of the future' were already present in the education of the present. The task of the revolutionary is to identify which of the existing tendencies is the key to the future. As we shall see, Marx believed the introduction of a combination of work and school to be a reform which also implied the possibility of a wholly new system of education.

Marx's six main arguments for the combination of work and education are of widely different kinds; so one can hardly give a single general assessment of the reasoning behind the idea. Some of his arguments have little relevance to the society of the twentieth century. It is the more philosophical and moral arguments, as one might expect, whose force is least affected by social developments. For this reason they are worth exploring in more detail.

The progressive alternative

Marx's ideas on work and education can be understood more clearly if we look into his relation to other standpoints from which the same theme has been treated. The first of these I shall call the progressive tradition in education. Marx refers to this approach in a brief but important passage in *Capital*. He discusses one scheme for educational reform put forward by a pioneer of English socialist thought: "As early as the end of the seventeenth century, John Bellers (a phenomenal figure in the history of political economy) clearly realised the necessity for abolishing the present system of education and the present mode of the division of labour . . ."[13] Bellers' proposal for a 'College of Industry of all Useful Trades and Husbandry' had been discovered and republished by Robert Owen, who recognised it as a forerunner of his own experiments. What impressed Marx in reading Bellers' pamphlet was his emphasis on the educational value of work for children. He cited a number of remarks on the point: "An idle learning being little better than the learning of idleness . . . Labour adds oil to the lamp of life, when thinking inflames it . . . A childish silly employ leaves the children's minds silly". Marx recalls this last remark "a foreshadowing protest against the Basedows and their modern imitators".[14]

This rather cryptic comment expresses a most important point. It refers to a tradition in education which advocates learning through activity — but an activity which is play rather than work as Marx understands it. One classic expression of this theme is the most influential of modern works on education: Rousseau's *Emile*, first published in 1762. Marx's allusion is to an educational figure of the same period: Johann Bernhard Basedow (1724-1790). It was Basedow who first translated Rousseau's ideas into practice by setting up a model school, the Philanthropinum, which operated in Dessau from 1774 to 1793.[15] Basedow followed Rousseau in refusing to impose on children the dress and manners of adults, keeping instead to a simple and 'natural' style of life for the child. The school programme emphasised active learning through games, exercise and simple crafts. Traditional instruction too was modified in Basedow's method by the use of picture books and the teaching of language through conversation, with an emphasis on the mother tongue.

Basedow's innovations were not an isolated phenomenon. Although the original Philanthropinum met with only partial success, it began a movement which soon became widespread. In Königsberg the philosopher Kant used Basedow's *Methodenbuch* as the text for his lectures on pedagogy, and acted as a local sponsor in the Philanthropin's campaign for moral and financial support.[16] Other supporters were influential in the establishment of a national system of education in Prussia. The contemporary experiments of Pestalozzi in Switzerland gave a wide circulation to similar ideas for a 'natural' education based on a recognition of the needs of the child. Many of these themes were later incorporated into the mainstream of educational thought, and can readily be recognized in the progressive tendency of the twentieth century.

Why, one may wonder, was Marx so hostile to this whole approach to education? He refers to it only in a general way, offering a summary dismissal which leaves the reasons for such a judgement unclear. The answer seems to lie in his insistence upon a sharp distinction between work and play as separate and incompatible human activities. While learning through work is a central part of Marx's idea of education, learning through play is not — in fact it seems not to exist for him. His 1866 resolution on education calls for gymnastics in the school programme, but only as a form of 'bodily education' — and alongside military training. In *Capital* Marx again refers to the introduction of military drill into the school, at least for boys, with approval.[17] This too was an educational movement coming into prominence during the period in which Marx was writing. But as Harold Silver points out: "The cultural and social intentions of the advocacy of drill were precise . . . Drilled boys were 'prompt, obedient, and punctual', and less inclined to mischief and insubordination".[18] Despite his condemnation of the Prussian system of education as "only calculated to make good soldiers",[19] Marx was, whether he realised it or not, endorsing something similar in approving the introduction of military training in the school, a policy whose purpose could only be to instil discipline and to 'build character'.

In the same way, we cannot identify Marx's mention of bodily exercise as a recognition of the place of play in education. Under this rationale, organized sport, gynmastic training and military drill is a corollary of work, not an alternative to it. The later history of education in socialist societies tends to bear out this conclusion. In the Soviet Union, for example, physical education has been regarded as having two important functions: as a preparation for work and military service, and as a moral training in responsibility and strength of character.[20] More recently, sport has been used as an instrument for enhancing national prestige through international competition. One cannot reasonably trace all these developments back to Marx, but nothing in his remarks on physical education rules out such interpretations.

One way to bring out Marx's idea of the relative importance of work and play in human development is to look at the approach which is in some ways its polar opposite. Here one might recall the famous remark of Schiller in his treatise on 'aesthetic education': "Man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays".[21] Clearly Marx would reject this claim: but why? One answer lies in his bias towards materialism in any account of human life. The connection may not be evident, but one feature of Schiller's notion of play brings it out: the link between play and *semblance*. According to Schiller, play is an activity which aims at aesthetic satisfaction; following Kant, he claims this to be a disinterested satisfaction, rather than the outcome of a desire to possess or consume. For that reason it is directed towards semblance rather than reality. Schiller explains: "This does not, of course, imply that an object in which we discover aesthetic semblance must be devoid of reality; all that is required is that our judgement of it should take no account of that reality; for inasmuch as it does take account of it, it is not an aesthetic judgement".[22] Its concern is the "semblance which neither seeks to represent reality nor needs to be represented by it". The worth of such 'pure' and 'honest' semblance, Schiller maintains, is independent of its relation to reality.

Now for Marx this category seems to be lacking — when he refers to semblance it is usually to the kind which is a representation of reality, a misleading one that needs to be overcome if genuine knowledge is to be attained. His theory of ideology is based on this notion of appearance. But the insistence on the importance of objective reality has implications for other human activities than knowledge. Marx seems to make the confrontation with reality a part of any worthwhile aspect of life: the emphasis on 'objective' activity in his early writings, for example, implies (though it does not amount to) an account of aesthetic experience quite different from Schiller's. Art on this view is

an embodiment of human personality in an objective form, and its value lies in the fact that it provides a confirmation of human powers which imagination by itself cannot. Thus play understood as a concern with semblance for its own sake cannot be regarded by Marx as having the importance of objective activity. It may be instead an escape from the real task of coming to terms with reality: hence his polemical rejection of play as 'mere amusement'.

Marx's insistence on the importance of labour is bound up with his notion of human nature. He writes: "For the socialist man the entire so-called history of the world is nothing but the creation of man through human labour".[23] He singles out for special praise the contribution made by Hegel who despite his idealism, does acknowledge the importance of labour in the development of human personality.[24] Here Marx possibly has in mind Hegel's account of the relation between master and slave in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. The master claims independence from the world of things by being willing to risk his life in the struggle for power; unable to do this, the slave remains dependent and therefore confronts reality on behalf of the master. It may seem that this puts the master in a position of advantage. But Hegel goes on to explain that bondage contains within itself the beginning of liberation. Although the slave cannot overcome the independence of reality, he can work on it. The activity of labour "passes into the form of object, into something that is permanent and remains . . . The consciousness that toils and serves accordingly attains by this means the direct apprehension of that independent being as its self".[25] The same idea appears in Marx's picture of a truly human mode of labour: "When looking at the object I would have the individual pleasure of knowing my personality to be objective, visible to the senses and hence a power beyond all doubt".[26] The satisfaction which Marx describes here is not a 'disinterested' one, and therefore cannot be found in semblance but only in objective reality. So the activity which brings it about must also be an 'objective' one — that is, it must be a form of labour.

The consequence for education is that Marx's concern with reality prevents him from acknowledging a place for play in the development of personality. The dismissal of 'the Basedows and their imitators' (he uses the derogatory word *Nachstümper*) expresses this judgement. Marx cannot accept the progressive idea that 'play is the work of the child'. As far as he is concerned, work is the work of the child. At least, this is the conclusion that follows from the distinction between work and play as discussed so far. The picture however alters somewhat if we use another comparison, this time with an attitude which does not want to *replace* work with play in the life in the child, but rather wants to *transform* work into something like play. Here Marx's judgement, at first simply negative, is really a more subtle one which throws further light on his general idea of work and education.

The Utopian alternative

The theme of combining learning with work is common in the writings of the early socialists. In the educational schemes of thinkers like Owen and Fourier it appears as the aim of new plans for public education. The usual Marxian verdict on the Utopian writers, however, is a rather negative one. *The Communist Manifesto* treats them as belonging to an early stage in the historical development of class struggle. Despite their value as criticisms of existing society, it argues, they anticipate too readily the achievement of its overthrow. In *The German Ideology*, on the other hand, Marx and Engels say that "Fourier's remarks concerning education . . . are by far the best of their kind and contain some masterly observations".[27] This is praise of a rather relative sort; but still praise. So what were Fourier's plans for education, and how similar were they to Marx's ideas?

Fourier's concept of 'harmonious education' is designed to reconcile the demands of industrial production with those of human life. His Utopia is a modern one: its mode of production is industry and manufacture. The problem of human fragmentation that arises out of this way of life is one that

Fourier recognizes and attempts to solve. He demands an education which is 'compound', in that it involves both mind and body, instead of leaving one or the other out completely as conventional education does. It is also 'integral', in that the development of mind and body proceeds not just in one direction but in a many-sided and harmonious way. Fourier writes: "It will not limit itself to endowing the child with a single vocation; instead it will develop about thirty vocations which will be graduated and dominant in diverse degrees.".[28]

The first demand of this education is to introduce the child to labour. Fourier argues that the basic drives of children fit them well for certain jobs, in particular those which appeal to their desires to imitate, or to make a noise, or "the penchant for handling things, exploring, running around, and constantly changing activities".[29] On the basis of this analysis, Fourier sets out a scheme of the very elaborate kind so characteristic of his writing. The children of Harmony are organised into various groups or 'tribes', according to age. At two years, the child is introduced to 'industrial attraction' by joining in the work of the 'tribe of Imps', which includes in helping in the kitchen by shelling peas and sorting them according to size. Each particular task within this operation is carried out by a group of Imps designated by various insignia. Fourier says:

> The enticement which is offered to children of various ages in all the workshops can only give the Imp of 24 months the illusion that he is working. It flatters his self-esteem. It persuades him that he has accomplished something and that he is almost the equal of the lower Imps of 26 or 28 months who are already members of this group, bedecked with plumes and ornaments which inspire profound respect in the beginning Imp.[30]

The mixture of good sense and extravagant fantasy in Fourier's descriptions of the education of the future gives them a certain undeniable charm. Marx, restricted by the decision to base his proposals on existing conditions, is suspicious of ideas which belong to the realm of imagination and fancy. The source of his sharpest attack on Fourier, however, lies in a difference over the concept of work itself. He writes: "Labour cannot become play, as Fourier would like, although it remains his great contribution to have expressed the suspension not of distribution, but of the mode of production itself, in a higher form, as the ultimate object".[31] Marx is in sympathy with Fourier's attempt to seek the transformation of social life at the level of production and not merely by looking for new forms of exchange — the relatively superficial strategy of such writers as Proudhon — yet he considers that Fourier's concept of 'attractive work' *(travail attractif)* is an unacceptable assimilation of work to play. The real solution is more complex. It involves the 'suspension' (Marx uses the Hegelian term *Aufhebung*) of labour in its existing form and the achievement of a higher form of labour in which the opposition of work and play is somehow overcome.

Marx's approach to this problem has two aspects. On the one hand, he rejects the assumption that labour is 'a curse', a loss of freedom and autonomy, and that happiness lies only in leisure. Claiming that such an idea is expressed in the writings of Adam Smith, Marx replies:

> Certainly, labour obtains its measure from the outside, through the aim to be attained and the obstacles to be overcome in attaining it. But Smith has no inkling whatever that this overcoming of obstacles is in itself a liberating activity — and that, further, the external aims become stripped of the semblance of merely external natural urgencies, and become posited as aims which the individual himself posits — hence as self-realization. . . .[32]

It is true that alienated labour is indeed a loss of independence and freedom, Marx goes on to explain in the same passage, but this need not be the case. Under favourable conditions, "labour becomes attractive work, the individual's self-realization, which in no way means that it becomes mere fun, mere amusement, as Fourier, with *grisette*-like naiveté, conceives it. Really free working, e.g. composing, is at the same time the most damned seriousness, the most intense exertion".

Later Marx adds: "Adam Smith considers labour psychologically, as to the fun or displeasure it holds for the individual. But it is something else, too, in addition to this *emotional* relation with his

activity . . . It is a positive, creative activity".[33] Marx wants to restate the terms of the argument, so that it will raise not simply questions about subjective feelings of pleasure or displeasure, but also the more important issue of 'self-realization'. This is the real point about the 'damned seriousness' of free labour. If our attention were merely on the immediate mood of the individual engaged in the activity, we might take that to be an objection. But a further consideration might take the effort and struggle involved in confrontation with an independent reality to be one sign that the process is indeed one of self-realization.

The example that Marx gives is a useful one. I take it he has in mind not just musical composition but also literary or scientific production — the note of conviction in his description suggests that it is based on personal experience. Now to describe composing as 'free labour' is to assume that it is not done primarily in order to earn a living. That might sometimes be the case, especially in a system where even artists and poets can become 'productive workers' in the capitalist sense. But Marx is considering a form of labour which is genuinely 'free'. The two main questions are therefore: what makes this activity 'labour', and what makes it 'free' labour? Let us take these order. One necessary feature of labour is that in it we somehow encounter the resistance of a real world. This is not a sufficient condition, because it is present in many forms of play — most obviously in those that involve competition, and in others as well. But it is a necessary condition, it seems. However the reality need not be an 'external' one in the usual sense: where composing is concerned, it is clearly the limitations of our own mental and physical constitution that call for effort and determination. Marx makes another point as well: that labour "obtains its measure from the outside, through the aim to be attained and the obstacles to be overcome in attaining it". Here the concept of labour is linked with the importance of the *outcome* — the aim which is 'outside' the activity itself. We need not assume that this has to be an object of some kind, though in the case of composing it will be. The performance of an actor or singer is work when its standard is important — and presumably in such a case appeal would be made to whatever criteria of assessment would be appropriate. Where there are no such criteria, singing is — to recall Marx's expression — 'mere amusement'.

We can now turn to the notion of 'free labour', which is closely linked with Marx's idea of 'self-activity'. Labour is 'free' when its aims are "aims which the individual himself posits". In saying this Marx is attempting to reconsider the distinction between 'external' and 'internal' aims, and if possible to show that the two do not exclude each ohter. The ideas of freedom and necessity too are to reconciled in the notion of 'free labour' or 'attractive work'. To be free is to posit one's own aims and to realise them through acting upon the world. As Marx puts it, "What happens is, not merely that the worker brings abut a change of form in natural objects; at the same time, in the nature that exists apart from himself, he realises his own purpose, the purpose which gives the law to his activities, the purpose to which he has to subordinate his own will".[34] That subordination is important: it represents the element of necessity which is present in all labour — but when it is subordination to a purpose which is chosen by the individual, it is consistent with the voluntary character of the activity as a whole.

What Marx counts against Fourier is his failure to recognise the continuing presence of this element in labour. Although Marx agrees that 'free labour' comes to resemble play in some respect, he insists that it can never *become* play. Fourier believes that children can be introduced to labour as an 'attractive' activity by appealing to "the penchant for handling things, exploring, running around, and constantly changing activities". These are just the impulses already observed in the play of the child. Even for the adult person, though, Fourier wants a transformation of work along the lines of play. For Marx however, as we have seen, this is an illusion. Work can become free rather than forced, but it cannot become play.

One may wonder whether Marx believes 'free labour' to be possible for the child. He does use the expression in describing the enlistment of children in the factory system: "Forced labour for the capitalist usurped the place, not only of the children's play, but also of free labour in the domestic circle, carried on for the family itself, and within moderate limits".[35] But in this traditional form of production the livelihood of the family is the aim of all its members, including the child. They do not work as 'individuals' in the sense used in our earlier discussion of free labour. In such a context, the idea of individual 'self-activity' hardly applies, and the concept of free labour refers (if at all) only to the family as a whole. The situation implied in a programme for child labour in modern society is inevitably different, but for the child a similar qualification seems to be appropriate. Possibly therefore the work included in education is not to be seen as 'free labour'. It may be a preparation for free labour in its educational function, and even a necessary part of development towards this goal, but it should not be represented as more than that.

The regulation of child labour

We have seen the general rationale of Marx's programme for the combination of work and education. It remains to consider his ideas on the practice of such a policy. The 1866 resolution on education begins with a broad statement of intention: in a 'rational state of society', every child of a certain age should work as well as attend school. The passage that follows both qualifies and defines this policy:

> However, for the present, we have only to deal with the children and young persons of both sexes belonging to the working people. They ought to be divided into three classes, to be treated differently; the first class to range from 9 to 12; the second, from 13 to 15 years; and the third, to comprise the ages of 16 and 17 years. We propose that the employment of the first class in any workshop or housework be legally restricted to two; that of the second, to four; and that of the third, to six hours. For the third class, there must be a break of at least one hour for meals or relaxation.[36]

In going into detail of this kind, Marx was working with a model in mind: the existing legislation on child labour in Britain. He had looked into the education clauses of the Factory Acts eight years earlier, when one of his regular contributions to the *New York Daily Tribune* discussed the 1858 reports of the British Factory Inspectors. By this time the 1844 Act which laid down the factory system of child labour had already become well-established. In describing its effects, Marx mentioned the devices used by manufacturers to circumvent its main requirement, that children between the ages of 8 to 13 should spend only half of each day at work and the other half attending school.

> The half-time system founded upon the principle that child labour should not be permitted unless, concurrently with such employment, the child attend some school daily, is objected to by the manufacturers on two grounds. They object to their responsibility of enforcing the school attendance of the half-times (children under 13 years of age), and they find it cheaper and less troublesome to employ one set of children instead of two sets, working alternately 6 hours. The first result, therefore, of the introduction of the half-time system was the nominal diminution to nearly one half of the children under 13 years employed in factories.[37]

Marx went on to explain the 'nominal' nature of this reduction, due in large part to the reclassification of children by helpful medical practitioners as being over 13 years of age. Despite the efforts of inspectors to keep a check on this practice, he observed, the enforcement of this law was quite inadequate.

The motives for evasion of the school laws were compelling not only for employers but for families, since the wages of the child worker were paid not to the children but to the parents. Hence the conclusion Marx drew from the inspectors' reports, that "on the one hand, the parents, if they can obtain full-time wages for their children, are anxious to withdraw them from school and half wages, while the only thing the mill-owner looks for in the juvenile hands is strength enough to enable them to perform their respective work".[38] In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx had already accused

modern industry of destroying the traditional family among the working class by turning parents into accomplices in the exploitation of their children.[39] Marx recognizes one purpose of legislation as the protection of children against their parents; but he does not blame the parents, themselves victims of an economic system which had made older forms of family life impossible.

Alongside the half work system stood a separate part of the Factory Acts dealing with child workers in cotton print works. Here the law of 1845 required periodic rather than daily schooling. During every period of six months the child had to attend school on at least 30 days and for a total period of at least 150 hours. In practice this could lead to widely varying results: at one extreme it might mean an alternation of one month's school with five months' work. By the time the next period of instruction came around, the inspectors commented, everything learned during the last period would have been forgotten.[40] In other factories the school time would be spread more evenly over the six months, but the hours of school attendance would vary from day to day in accordance with the requirements of the factory owner: "and thus", wrote an inspector, "the child was, as it were, buffeted from school to work, from work to school until the tale of 150 hours was told".[41]

Added to these faults were the deficiencies of the schools themselves. Inspectors' reports told of 'schools' at which no learning could take place due to overcrowding and inadequate supervision and also in many cases to the employment of teachers who were wholly unqualified for their task. One of the reforms accomplished by the 1844 Act was the demand that school masters ought to keep a register of attendance and be able to sign their own names, but even this minimal standard of literacy was sometimes found lacking.[42] The overwhelming difficulties facing responsible teachers were described in one inspector's report.

> In many schools where there is a competent teacher, his efforts are of little avail from the distracting crowd of children of all ages, from infants of three years old and upwards; his livelihood,miserable at the best, depending on the pence received from the greatest number of children whom it is possible to cram into the space. To this is to be added scanty school furniture, deficiency of books, and other materials for teaching, and the depressing effect upon the poor children themselves of a close, noisome atmosphere. I have been in many schools, where I have seen rows of children doing absolutely nothing; and this is certified as school attendance, and, in statistical returns, such children are set down as being educated.[43]

In surveying these difficulties, Marx placed full blame on the government for requiring the education of working children only with the greatest reluctance and with as many loopholes in its legal requirements as possible. He concluded: "The spirit of capitalist production shines clearly in the ludicrous wording of the so-called educational clauses of the Factory Acts; it is conspicuous in the lack of any administrative machinery, in consequence of which this compulsory education is for the most part illusory; it is manifest in the opposition which the factory owners offer to these educational clauses, and in the shifty expedients to which they have recourse in their endeavours to evade the law".[44]

Yet for all these objections Marx appears in the end as a strong supporter of the system combining schooling with labour for children. In bringing his earlier reports up to date for the first volume of *Capital*, which was published in 1867, he added a comment that "the obstacles in the way of the education clauses have, of late years, been to some extent overcome".[45] Later in the same work he expressed an even more optimistic assessment:

> Although the education clauses of the Factory Acts go a very little way, at least they embody a proclamation that the giving of elementary instruction is to be a necessary accompaniment of child labour. The success of the Act in this respect gave the first proof that it is possible to combine education and physical culture with manual labour; and, on the other hand, to combine manual labour with education and physical culture. By questioning the school-masters, the factory inspectors soon discovered that the factory children, although they received only half as much instruction as the regular day scholars, learned quite as much and often more. "This can be accounted for by the simple fact that, with only being at school for one half of the day, they are

always fresh, and nearly always ready and willing to receive instruction. The system on which they work, half manual labour and half school, renders each employment a rest and a relief to the other; consequently, both are far more congenial to the child, than would be the case where he kept constantly at one. It is quite clear that a boy who has been at school all the morning cannot (in hot weather particularly) cope with one who comes fresh and bright from his work". Further information will be found in Senior's speech at the Social Science Congress in Edinburgh in the year 1863. He shows there, among other things, how the monotonous and needlessly long school day for children of the upper and middle classes uselessly adds to the labour of the teacher, "while he not only fruitlessly, but absolutely injuriously, wastes the time, health, and energy of the children".[46]

In a footnote Marx adds a remark taken from the evidence to the Children's Employment Commissioners by the owner of a silk factory who "naively declares . . . *'I wish my own children could have some work as well as play to give variety to their schooling'* ".[47] One might wonder who is being naîve here: the employer or the reader taking his testimony at face value. Marx's claim for the 'success' of the half work system is based upon a very selective set of citations from reports of factory inspectors and commissioners. As Harold Silver points out, one could assemble the same amount of evidence — and from the same sources — pointing toward the failure of the half-time system. The idea that children would come 'fresh and bright' to the classroom after working during the morning was contradicted by witnesses who claimed that, on the contrary, they "came to school half asleep after their half-day's work".[48] The school may have been a 'rest and relief' for such children, but not in the way that Marx intended.

Widespread opposition based on evidence of this kind eventually led by the end of the nineteenth century to the total discontinuation of the part-time system. Even in 1867, when Marx endorsed the policy in *Capital*, the drive towards full-time education for all children was well under way. From a later point of view the half-time system appears as a temporary measure in the advance towards this goal, and not as the plan for a future education which Marx took it to be. To this extent, his diagnosis of 'success' was not borne out by events. Yet is remains to Marx's credit that his attempts to come to terms with the problems of work and education led him to raise important questions about the assumptions which underly our thinking on these themes. We can find in his criticisms of alternative approaches to education, and in his own theory as well, a contribution which deserves attention.

Notes

[1] *The General Council of the First International, 1866-1868* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), pp. 343-44.

[2] See e.g. the references to "self-evident laws of nature" in Marx, *Capital*, trans. E. and C. Paul (London: J.M. Dent, 1930), p. 817.

[3] *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. R.C. Tucker, second edition (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 531.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 541.

[5] *Capital*, p. 522.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 521, note.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 449.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *The Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 541.

[10] *The General Council of the First International, 1868-1870* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), p. 147.

[11] CW 5, p. 49. Here and throughout 'CW' stands for Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975-).

[2] CW 6, p. 498.

[13] *Capital*, p. 527.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 528. See also R.T. Sidwell, " 'All Tongue and No Hand': Two Theories of Socialist Education before Owen", *Educational Theory*, 22 (1972), pp. 78-86, and J.T. Zepper, "John Bellers — Educator of Marx?", *Science and Society*, 43 (1979), pp. 87-91.

[15] See W. Boyd, *The History of Western Education*, eighth edition (London: A. and C. Black, 1966), pp. 307-11.

[16] *The Educational Theory of Immanuel Kant*, ed. E.F. Buchner (Philadelphia-London: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1904), p. 16 and pp. 242-46. See also Kant, *Philosophical Correspondence, 1759-99*, ed. and trans. A. Zweig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 83-85.

[17] *Capital*, p. 521.

[18] H. Silver, "Ideology and the factory child: attitudes towards half-time education", in P. McCann (ed.) *Popular Education and Socialization in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1977), p. 148. See also J.S. Hurt, "Drill, discipline and the elementary school ethos", *ibid.*, pp. 167-191.

[19] *The General Council of the First International, 1868-1870*, p. 141.

[20] See J. Riordan, "Marx, Lenin and Physical Culture", *Journal of Sport History*, 3 (1976), pp. 156-60; and V. Zilberman, "Physical Education in the Soviet Union", *McGill Journal of Education*, 17 (1982), pp. 65-75.

[21] Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. E.M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 107.

[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 197-99.

[23] CW 3, p. 305.

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 332-33 and 342.

[25] Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. Baillie, second edition (London: Allen and Unwin, 1949), p. 238.

[26] CW 3, p. 227.

[27] CW 5, p. 512.

[28] *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier*, ed. and trans. J. Beecher and R. Bienvenu (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), p. 258.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 308.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 310.

[31] Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. M. Nicolaus (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 712.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 611.

[33] *Ibid.*, pp. 613-14.

[34] *Capital*, p. 170.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 419.

[36] *The General Council of the First International, 1866-1868*, p. 344.

[37] CW 16, p. 207.

[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 206-07.

[39] CW 6, pp. 499-500.

[40] *Capital*, p. 427.

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] CW 16, p. 195, and *Capital*, pp. 425-26.

[43] *Capital,* p. 426.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 425.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 427, note.

[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 521-22.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 521, note.

[48] Silver, *art. cit.*, p. 148.