



The Hopeless University

Intellectual Work
at the end of
The End of History

Richard Hall

may fly

Endorsements for *The Hopeless University*:

Krystian Szadkowski, Institute of Philosophy, Adam Mickiewicz University, *Poznań*, Poland.

Raymond Williams wrote that the most formidable task of all is to show the connections between “the formations of feeling and relationship which are our immediate resources in any struggle”. In *The Hopeless University* Richard Hall takes up this task seriously, by helping us to understand how the “university-as-is” relies on the universalization of anxiety and the spread of alienation, at the end of the End of History. Moving from hopeless hierarchies, elitists privileges, widespread pathologies of the capitalist academic workplaces to ineffective positivist methodologies that lay at the core of the contemporary university, he criticizes the widespread culture of self-harm, imposed precarity, senseless competition, to address the contradictory essence of our hopeless institutions. Richard suggests that to escape, we need to find the strength in what we have and who we are – in our daily practices of solidarity and mutuality, in our acts of self-care and kindness. *The Hopeless University* is the first and necessary step on this long path.

Svenja Helmes, PhD student at the University of Sheffield and co-author of *Life for the Academic in the Neoliberal University*.

In *The Hopeless University* Richard Hall builds on his previous book, *The Alienated Academic*, as he argues against the University in its current form. He delves deeper into the idea of refusing what the University has become, an anxiety machine responsible for its workers’ ill-health,

for the sake of producing labour power and capital. Not only does the book reflect on the circumstances of those involved, it also situates the University within global socio-economic and socio-environmental crises, and positions it as an anti-human project that puts surplus before people. He reiterates the non-neutrality of the University and its complicity in the reproduction of inequality and inequity, as those in precarious positions are further exploited when they are gendered, racialised, disabled and/or queer. Thus, *The Hopeless University* centres calls for the abolition of the University as we know it, through the dismantling of its forces and relations of production at the level of society.

Joel Lazarus, University of Bath.

At the end of *The End of History*, we urgently need brave voices to tell us that, no matter how fervently we might hope, we must confront the stark truth that everything may well not turn out all right; to confront ourselves in and of this truth; and to begin the necessary process of grieving this truth. Richard's forensic deconstruction of the capitalist university, and the senses of hopelessness and helplessness it generates, leaves us unable to deny this truth any longer. Each page of this wonderful book is filled with vulnerability, courage, wisdom, and, above all, love. Richard combines all four of these qualities in his refusal to offer any strategic blueprint for an alternative post-capitalist university, and in his invitation to us to sit with ourselves and with each other, with our wounds and our pain, and the bewildering but beautiful entangled messiness of our lives and our world. As such, we might be attentive at last to a present that can integrate and be fertilised by a past, in order to conceive a new dawn yearning to be born.

The Hopeless University:

Intellectual Work at the end of The End of History

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This book is dedicated to friends who were there from the start.

Joel, Joss, Keith, Keri, Krystian, Liz, Mike, Mohamed, Nick and Sarah.

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This book is overdue. Its late arrival reflects the realities of life and work under the rule of a pandemic and the uncertainties wrought by it. That it is here at all is a testament to the forgiveness and support of a number of friends, not least Jo, to whom I owe an immense debt.

The pandemic helped to shape the argument by slowing it down, and enabling me to remember my training as a historian. Remembering reflects my yearning to understand my present in light of my past, in order to act. This has required sitting with, excavating and writing-through my own entanglements as a means of letting out. Such letting out is the first step in taking meaningful action, and in the context of this book it is fundamental in building the argument that, in the midst of intersecting crises, we are able to make our own history. We were told that we were at the end of history, because capitalism had won, and alternative paths had been foreclosed upon. Yet, this is not the case anymore. In this moment of recognition, we might let out our wounding, and move.

Music has been central to this project of recognition. This book owes a debt to Low, This Is The Kit, Shostakovich, Mogwai,

Hot Chip, Hayden Thorpe, Tame Impala, Sharon van Etten, King Creosote, Jon Hopkins, Everything Everything, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Wild Beasts, bon iver, Bibio, Björk, Aphex Twin, Boards of Canada, Frankie Knuckles, Tchaikovsky, James Blake, Jungle, Let's Eat Grandma, Little Dragon, Massive Attack, Michael Kiwanuka, Rozi Plain, sir Was, The The and Sufjan Stevens. I love that it has also been produced in relation to an album of the same name by *Rae Elbow and the Magic Beans*, available at: <https://raeelbow.bandcamp.com/>

In recognising that we are at *the end of The End of History*, my education has been enriched by listening to: *Aufhebunga Bunga*, the global politics podcast at the end of the end of history; *Swampside Chats*; *From Alpha to Omega*; and, *Surviving Society*. The *Guardian Football Weekly* podcast and *One Pod Beyond* have also been a distraction from the failure of politics to connect with history. I am grateful to these people for enabling the space for connections to be re-made by walking, listening and then moving.

In this argument, our re-making is not linear, rather it situates an array of entanglements in open conversation with each other: anxiety and existence; hopelessness and yearning; the past and the present; value and values. A crucial entanglement is between: first, sitting with hopelessness as an active process of decomposing and recycling feelings, stories, identities; and second, the need for movement, as a new sense of knowing, doing and being.

There is no prescription here, and no utopia or utopian set of principles to be defined. I have nothing but disdain for recommendations, blueprints, models or descriptions of what might be. Instead of truth-claims or hedges based upon ideas of truth, I return to my heartfelt reading of the world in relation to dignity, framed as *Preguntando caminamos*, or *asking we walk*. I love the idea that we negate the power of others over us, and thereby elevate our individual and mutual humanity by asking,

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sharing, sitting and doing. I love that this includes a focus upon listening rather than dominating our environment and the world. I love that this might be the mutual and communal sharing of our pain, in order to build a movement of dignity. This is the work of re-integration to which I feel connected, and for which we deserve to struggle.

Here, two songs have mattered as I have written. In the song *Dancing and Fire*, from the album 'Double Negative' by Low, there is an understated belief that we are not sitting with the end, rather we are acknowledging the end of hope. This is a sense of giving up what could never be, in order to take ownership and move autonomously. In our history-making, I hear a disdain for hope as a false idea of redemption. Instead I hear a deep struggle simply to exist in the present, in spite of the odds. In the song *Keep Going*, from the album 'Off Off On' by This Is The Kit, the idea of movement emerges from the confidence and power we have in: voicing and being heard; waiting and making sense; moving forward authentically when ready, as an act of doing; and the desire to keep going. By looking through the darkness of this world and being against hope, and then engaging with entwined histories, identities, communities, and places, movement becomes possible.

In this process, I owe a huge debt to a range of academics, activists, educators and friends. In particular, my critical, academic thinking has developed in a conversations with a range of inspirational people, including: Nick Allsopp; Sarah Amsler; Kate Bowles; Joyce Canaan; Ioana Cerasella Chis; Mark Charlton; John Coster; Martin Eve; Keri Facer; Melonie Fullick; Sol Gamsu; Raj Gill; Karen Gregory; Tony Green; Kennetta Hammond-Perry; Klaus Heinrich; Enja Helmes; Nicky Hudson; Mohamed Kassam; Rik Kennedy; David Kernohan; Vic Knight; Joel Lazarus; Liz Morrish; Sara Motta; Mike Neary; Lisa Palmer; Andre Pusey; Mark

Rawlinson; Keith Smyth; Richard Snape; Krystian Szadkowski; Rob Weale; and Joss Winn. There are others and I give thanks to them every day.

In *Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed is clear about how important it is for us to state whose work and practice has enabled our own thinking, and to situate ourselves through the wider groups inside which our solidarity has developed. In the context of this work, I remain indebted to the following people: Ansgar Allen; Sara Ahmed; Vanessa Andreotti; John Bellamy Foster; Gurminder Bhambra; Gargi Bhattachariyya; Kalwant Bhopal; Werner Bonefeld; George Ciccariello-Maher; Simon Clarke; Harry Cleaver; Boaventura de Sousa Santos; Ana Dinerstein; William Davies; Emma Dowling; Ana Dinerstein; Raya Dunayevskaya; Nick Dyer-Witheford; Akwugo Emejulu; Silvia Federici; Nancy Fraser; Priyamvada Gopal; Richard Gunn; Max Haiven; Georg Hegel; John Holloway; bell hooks; Peter Hudis; Anselm Jappe; Karl Marx; Eden Medina; Achille Mbembe; István Mészáros; Eli Meyerhoff; Heidi Mirza; Fred Moten; Chris Newfield; Moishe Postone; William Robinson; Sean Sayers; Eve Tuck; Linda Tuhiwai Smith; and Amy Wendling.

At MayFly, Toni Ruuska and Steffen Boehm have been incredibly supportive of this work. Working with Mayfly is important to me, because supporting publishing houses that are open, or that resist the subsumption of academic work by corporate publishers, enables a wider intellectual dialogue. The transparent, democratic engagement of Toni and Steffen has been fundamental to my writing process. I owe a debt of gratitude to Mihkali Pennanen

for the gift of his care and attention on the manuscript.

Whilst this book is informally dedicated to all those who labour in the University, it is formally dedicated to those with whom I have struggled inside-against-and-beyond the University. It is dedicated to those with whom I have: stood on picket lines; been

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kettled; marched on demonstrations; struggled for radical and open alternatives; broken bread; and, offered care, mutual support and dignity. It is for Joel Lazarus, Joss Winn, Keith Smyth, Keri Facer, Krystian Szadkowski, Liz Morrish, Mike Neary, Mohamed Kassam, Nick Allsopp and Sarah Amsler. The worlds for which they yearn are never hopeless.

In solidarity.

Foreword

Sarah Amsler, School of Education, University of Nottingham.

The Hopeless University is a beautiful contribution to dismantling the modern university as we know it, and an invitation to explore the liberatory potential of surrendering hope in its reform. It issues a timely and trustworthy call for surrendering to the deepest changes in how we organise not only collective knowledge but our relationship to one another and the earth; for releasing attachments to ‘imagined alternatives’ and focusing on re-establishing right relations with life itself – what Richard calls a ‘sustainable metabolic interaction between humans and nature’. It is timely because he abandons parochial and presentist stories about the ‘crisis of the (Westernized) university’ (Cupples and Grossfoguel 2019) to tell another about the university’s place in an ongoing global catastrophe which stretches from European colonialization to the sixth mass extinction we are living in today, and encompasses a plenitude of struggles for racial, Indigenous, gender, environmental and epistemic justice. It is trustworthy because he is a formidable analyst of both the modern university and the psycho-somatic and political violences of capitalism, and

because he offers us a compassionate container in which to face the end of the modern university, and of the world, as we know it (Ferreira da Silva 2014; Stein *et al.* 2019).

Hopeless bears bittersweet gifts for the various readers it is bound to attract. To those who encounter the promises of the modern Anglo-European university as deceitful, disorienting and oppressive, the book simply says ‘yes’: the realities of historical indignance, struggle, exhaustion and liberation are honoured here. To burned-out cultural workers who know without (or perhaps especially when not) thinking that this anthropocentric, Eurocentric, capitalist, racist, patriarchal and ableist institution is deadly and dying but dare not acknowledge it, the book is a permission slip to acknowledge that ‘*we* are the hopeless university’ and explore what possibilities lie beyond that threshold of grief. And while it is not written for people in positions of great power in British universities, the book also invites them to recognise and interrupt the ‘metabolically violent ways of life’ which circulate through global knowledge institutions today.

Hopeless unapologetically refuses safe harbour to denials that the modern-colonial university is a cruelly optimistic and life-negating social form. It outlines in granular detail how the university cannibalizes its members; is incapable of resolving the economic, environmental and intersectional problems that are created by the necrophiliac logics of power it shares; is complicit in reproducing historical, systemic forms of social and ecological harm; and invests in ways of being that neither value nor sustain life itself. It is precisely this refusal to fall back on wishful thinking that makes the book a hospitable incubator for those who are ready to explore what abandoning hope in this historical formation can shift.

The invocation to yearn and to connect with yearning that is threaded throughout this text distinguishes it from much other work about the university that is rooted and teleologically

anchored in hope. ‘Hope’, Richard says, ‘is not our starting point; rather, yearning for a new path emerges in a critical reconnection of the idea of human-as-intellectual, with the human-as-psychological and the human-in-nature’ (and as part of nature). In a departure from the voluminous body of thought about the ‘neoliberal university’ that has been published over the last half-century, *Hopeless* reorients our gaze towards the problem of what we become when becoming as part of this system, and on what connections to human and nonhuman life we sever through these modes of becoming. It is hopeless, Richard argues, to believe that such ill and impoverished subjects can imagine radically other ways of knowing and doing. When he invites mourning what we/ the university has become – has always been – he is not proposing that we sink into melancholia but rather that we move in the direction of ‘academic death’ so that we may learn to ‘hospice’ the modern university itself (Andreotti 2020). Helping it die well is perhaps the only thing that ‘might enable a renewed energy and agency beyond the capitalist institution and its hierarchies, privileges, pathologies and methodologies’.

Much time in this book is dedicated to documenting and explaining how the university and those existing within it are capitalism; beings and ways of being that are shaped, governed, sorted and disciplined to produce surplus value for an institution whose survival depends on performing this function within a complex transnational association of financial accumulation. Richard provides an excellent forensic analysis of the materialised anatomy of this system, which theorist Ana Dinerstein (2015) describes as part of a global machinery for the ‘political production of hopelessness’.

Everyday structures and forms of incorporation, governance, management and regulation of the university, for example, are represented as *forms of hopelessness* – forms of life, in other words,

that are rooted in and generate life-negating ways of being and possible futures. Everyday experiences and stories about privilege and exclusion, overwork and precarity, interpersonal abuse, are re-presented as *pathologies of hopelessness* – symptoms of stress, anxiety and poor mental, physical and spiritual health which indicate the diseased condition of a living system where flows of being and becoming are systematically expropriated, exploited or denied. Our attention is further drawn to the *pathological flows of hopelessness* circulating within this system that elicit these symptoms – all of which are, in everyday life, often interpreted as bad ways of doing that simply need to be changed. These include divisions between people into roles and hierarchies, between disciplines and fields of knowledge, and between teaching and research; including the transmutation of curriculum into commodity, the production and naturalisation of hierarchies of valuable knowledge and knowers through ranking, the reduction of difference and complexity through bureaucratic governance, the reduction of knowing and being to measurable performance and, above all, the fundamental separation of being (including learning) from the wider ecosystemic processes of life that human beings belong to.

It does not stop here. *Hopeless* guides us even further into the everyday mechanics of these flows to lay bare how everyday academic practices – including and perhaps especially hegemonically ‘successful’ ones that are institutionally rewarded with job security, promotion and progress, personal recognition, status, valorised identities, ascription of worth, sense of individual purpose and so on – are accomplished through *methods of metabolic control* that reproduce this system. Like how time is constructed through small decisions about who and what to prioritise during a day, how to rank someone’s value on a spreadsheet, how much time to devote to a student complaint about racial discrimination:

banal yet misogynist in their disembodiment, white supremacist in their urgency and perfectionism, vampiric. Like how academic activists struggle with something called time as if it is a resource to be used productively (or not), managed effectively (imagining that ‘working time’ and ‘living time’ can be severed and ‘balanced’), calculated (as ‘workload units’), subverted or stolen.

Richard paints a colourful picture of how, through both the least and most hopeful efforts of academics themselves, dominant ways of being in the modern university build muscles for a ‘metabolically violent way of life’ in which ‘making time for life beyond value is impossible’ and in which, as a result, we ‘can’t create the foundations for struggles’ against all separations of value from life. The modern university does not generate methods for dismantling the ‘colonisation of the human lifeworld’ because its ontological foundations are colonial and prioritise forms, flows and methods that produce a collectively somatic system of ‘metabolic unfreedom’. *Hopeless* deftly moves between theoretically abstract and materialised concrete to demonstrate not only how racialised, patriarchal, capitalist and ableist modes of modern-colonial violence circulate through forms, flows and methods for organising everyday life, but also how they are naturalised through the desire to preserve a ‘better’ university within, and as if against, this life-negating ontology. This desire, Richard argues, has no horizon of hope. This is not because there are ‘no alternatives’ in some generalised, universal sense, or that none can form through life-giving movements in the here and now. Creative processes of living and dying are happening always-already everywhere; the task is to become able to see, hear and sense them amidst the ‘ambient noise’ of the university as we know it.

While we do not *know* how to do this yet, *Hopeless* declares that we can *remember* our non-capitalist capacities by elevating our deep yearnings for dignity and attuning to our sensuous, embodied

wisdom that alerts us to their negation. As Silvia Federici (2016) points out, the body – particularly female, Indigenous, Black, person of colour, queer and disabled bodies – has historically ‘put limits to our exploitation and is something that capitalism has incessantly struggled to overcome’ – and, it must be remembered, has often failed in this endeavour. Deeper than and counter to capital, humans like other species have a ‘structure of needs and desires created in us not only by our conscious decisions or collective practices, but by millions of years of material evolution: the need for the sun, for the blue sky and the green of trees, for the smell of the woods and the oceans, the need for touching, smelling, sleeping, making love’ (Federici 2016).

Moving through *The Hopeless University*, and indeed once beyond the point where hope as we know it might return, we are guided further towards a multiverse in which modern constructions like ‘the university’, ‘the academic’ and ‘the student’ have little collective value and what matters is what helps things flow – including new imaginaries of how we might ‘compost’ the toxic shit of hegemonic ways of knowing and being to generate fertilizer for growing something new (Andreotti 2019; Stein with Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures 2020). Here, Richard explores the crucial contributions that Indigenous scholars whose work is rooted in Indigenous ways of being and struggles for them, as well as feminist, critical race, queer and intersectional analyses, make to this inquiry. In all these fields, ‘struggles to delegitimize the immorality of white, male privilege and ways of knowing, doing and being in the world’ are what he calls ‘spores or seeds for further decomposition’ of the modern university’s waste material and of desires to continue investing in its cruelly optimistic promises. Neither he nor I can stress enough that this scholarship does not provide transhistorical answers, ‘alternatives’, permissions for nonindigenous people to appropriate Indigenous knowledge

or to seek simplistic ways escapes from the deeply uncomfortable question of which species still left on earth might survive humans' Anthropocentric catastrophes. Indeed, as Kyle Whyte indicates, even the framing of this question is beside the point, as 'the hardships many nonindigenous people dread most of the climate crisis are ones that Indigenous peoples have endured already due to different forms of colonialism: ecosystem collapse, species loss, economic crash, drastic relocation and cultural disintegration' (2018, p. 226). What this work does do in hegemonic discourses on the 'crisis of the (Westernized) university', however, is 'force a reckoning with the university's relationship with uncertainty and vulnerability' and with the global consequences of sustaining a cruelly optimistic hope that its brutal ontology can support practices of ecological balance or care. In the face of these challenges, Richard presents a compelling argument that abandoning hope in the university as we know it is not only our only hope but a moral, political, spiritual and ecological responsibility. What comes next is messy, not guaranteed and teeming with life. I hope you accept his invitation to explore this field of possibilities by feeling and yearning your way home, as he suggests, with your wholest heart.

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Foreword

Introduction:

A terrain of hopelessness at the end of The End of History

Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and [humans are] at last compelled to face with sober senses [their] real condition of life and [their] relations with [their] kind. (Marx and Engels 1848/2002: 13)

[the petty bourgeois] views the production of commodities as the absolute summit of human freedom and individual independence

(Marx 1867/2004: 161)

This book relates socially-useful, intellectual work to the idea of the University, in particular in the global North. In taking the University as its unit of analysis, the argument centres upon the critique of spaces that are often celebrated as places for self-actualisation, becoming and belonging. However, increasingly work inside these allegedly most liberal of institutions reflects a deformed reality, in which existences as students, teachers, professional services' staff and researchers have become a source of hopelessness.

Prosaically, hopelessness erupts from a lack of autonomy over working conditions, deepening performance management, and the intensification of work. These have become normalised through the generalisation of overwork, and in a lack of self-care, described as culturally-acceptable, self-harming activities. Experienced differentially, the compulsion to undertake work that does not nourish us has a range of intersectional, intercommunal and intergenerational impacts. Culturally-acceptable, self-harm is exacerbated because work in the University is increasingly disconnected from the realities of global crises of political economy, settler-colonialism (in terms of respecting the lives of black, indigenous and of colour people), environment and epidemiology. Surviving this disconnection requires ever-increasing amounts of cognitive dissonance.

Poetically, our hopelessness reflects self-denial, and the denial of that for which humans yearn. University workers are subject to disconnections, separations, estrangements and modes of alienating work, which are enforced structurally. The argument here focuses upon the University as a joint venture or association of capitals, designed for economic value, and predicated upon structures that separate individuals, disciplines and institutions. Moreover, hopelessness is reproduced through diseased or

pathological, organisational cultures framed by competition. These immoral economies generate ill-being and distress for those who labour in the University, which increasingly functions as an anxiety machine. These cultures are immanent to methodological practices, which ensure that the desire for surpluses dominates intellectual work. As a result, survival, rather than a meaningful and authentic existence, is that for which most appear to labour.

At the heart of this argument is the asymmetrical entanglement of the demand for economic value and our yearning for humane values, which inflects intellectual work. Here, the idea that University work is a labour of love, becomes weaponised against students, teachers, professional services' staff and researchers. In response, this is not simply a book in the tradition of critical university studies. Rather, it connects to the works of decoloniality and abolition, which seek to reconnect intellectual work to its humane, historical and material entanglements. It questions whether the University is a space worth struggling for, or whether our work in it is done. In turn, this reflects our internal struggles, in which we grieve for what we perceive the University has become, and question whether it was ever really that for which we yearned.

This idea of yearning is fundamental as the argument develops. The book demonstrates a deep resistance to the idea of hope, which feels like: first, a screen upon which we project our own lack of agency; second, a fetishisation of the future as an act of dissonance grounded in an idealisation of the past; and third, a disconnection from critical work on the self in the present. The argument respects the wealth of work undertaken on critical hope as an unfolding terrain of possibility, whilst also understanding that for many hope was a luxury or a waste-of-time. Thus, the thinking developed here focuses upon composting how intellectual workers feel about the world, in order mutually to extract that which enriches our lives in the present and enabling us to dispose of the waste.

This focus upon entanglements, yearning and composting is situated against a movement of the heart as a reclaiming of our collective, material practice in the world. It situates the idea that it is easier to imagine the end of the world, than the end of capitalism, against the urgent need to act and seek radical alternatives to a crisis-ridden system of social reproduction. The arguments developed here deny the validity of solutions that lie in finessing the system as it currently exists, rather than in the realm of real human agency. The University-as-is represents the idea that we are at *The End of History*, and that our existence is defined inside a closed system that is transhistorical and natural. Whilst the University remains committed to repurposing all of social life in the name of value, by working towards employability, entrepreneurship, excellence, impact and satisfaction, other possibilities for intellectual work are opening-up. As we face intersecting crises, it is possible to view a new historical horizon, which pushes back against the fatalism that is central to capital's social metabolic control. This requires a new terrain for intellectual work.

This returns us to the idea that the University: first, has become a place that has no socially-useful role beyond the reproduction of capital, and is therefore an anti-human project devoid of hope; and second, remains unable to respond meaningfully with crises that erupt from the contradictions of capital. Thus, in its maintenance of business-as-usual, the University remains shaped as a tactical response to these contradictions. As University workers reveal their own agency in the world, actualised at the end of *The End of History*, they might ask whether other modes of intellectual work and higher learning are possible, beyond the hopeless University. This enables us to consider the potential for reimagining intellectual work as a movement of sensuous human activity in the world.

The value of the University

The University has been forced into a constant rear-guard action, having to defend its governance, regulation and funding against relentless scrutiny. This ongoing analysis is an attempt to shape a particular terrain upon which the idea or symbolism of the University can be contested. This symbolism mediates how the University is experienced by those who labour inside it, by reforming structures, cultures and activities. These experiences are concrete and active, but they are also the result of, and immanent to, individual and collective interpretations, hopes, myths, histories, anxieties, and more. For University workers, these experiences create a set of imaginaries for the University, which are mediated by its symbolic role and power, yet always offering a partial reality. The relationship between these imaginaries and the symbolism of the University has a formative power in defining the subjectivity of University workers (Lacan 1994).

Subjectivity is shaped by University structures that reveal its: shifting forms; cultures that appear as pathologies; and, activities recalibrated as methodologies. These forms, pathologies and methodologies are internalised by those University workers, whose relationships are then mediated by: the market and its need for surpluses; the desire for academic commodities as private property that can be exchanged; and, divisions of privileged, academic labour. These mediations act as cover for refusing the humanity of intellectual work, because the meaning of the University is generated through a craving for economic value. This value is inhuman, and is predicated upon an idea of University work that can be validated through individual, subject-based and institutional performance management.

Value is central to any understanding of the idea of the University, and how that is contested by *both* those immediately immersed in it, like academics, professional services' staff, students, *and* those

who orbit it, like professional associations, philanthrocapitalists, venture capital, policymakers, educational technology vendors, credit ratings agencies, lenders in bond markets, and so on. This latter group form a fluid, interconnected, transnational activist network seeking to reengineer the University for the purpose of extracting surpluses, in the form of rents, debt repayments, new commodities as knowledge exchange, or forms of human capital (Szadkowski 2016). Reengineering erupts from the compulsion of the totality of capitalist social relations for an expansion in value, experienced as constant revolutionising. This generates an ‘epoch-making mode of exploitation, which in the course of its historical development revolutionises the entire economic structure of society by its organisation of the labour process and its gigantic extension of technique’ (Marx 1857/1993: 120).

The economic structure of society, materialised through relations and forces of production, is perpetually in motion under capitalism. It unfolds through the search for wealth (commodities), surpluses (labour or time) or profits (money), which, inside capitalist social relations, shape the universe of value. Such value is a social relation because it emerges from and drives the production of commodities, as the things that enable life. Thus, individuals are brought into relation inside and between institutions, through contracts that require them, for instance: to produce and deliver a curriculum; to undertake pastoral care for students; to examine postgraduate work; to implement a new technological infrastructure; and, to decolonise a library catalogue. Beyond this, those individuals are creating teaching, research and knowledge exchange outputs (or the infrastructure for such outputs), which form commodities conditioned as private property, against which rents can be extracted or funding allocated.

This universe of value was analysed by Marx in terms of productive capacity and capability, and the search for either

simple or expanded modes of exchange (Marx 1867/2004). The desire for surplus catalyses an ongoing revolutionising of the organisational and technological forces of production, and the relations of production that activate them. The social relations of life are conditioned by a search for value, which emerges from human activity that is over-and-above that which is paid for such activity. Thus, the rents extracted from textbooks exceed the labour costs that went into their production. The workload allocated for particular academic activities, like assessment and feedback, rarely enables such work to be completed without eating into home or leisure time, and thereby reducing the value of the wage to the academic labourer. The fees demanded of students divert surpluses from individuals and their families/carers towards the reproduction of capitalist institutions.

The desire for surplus is predicated upon systemic expansion. As such, value as a social relation, and an economic reality, is totalising. The University sits in a network or association of capitals with a compulsion to expand value-producing activity. Value rests upon relations of exploitation between: institutions and both employees and students; institutions and suppliers of academic commodities, services (including consultancy) and infrastructure; national regulators and institutions; and, *both* national *and* transnational policymakers and institutions. Relations of exploitation are then maintained and reproduced by narratives of value-for-money, impact, excellence, and so on, which estrange University workers from each other and their communities (Hall 2018).

Expansion demands the systemic alienation of those who are contracted *either* to generate surplus-value over-and-above the value of their wage, *or* to reproduce the infrastructures for value production. Within capitalism, the alternatives, deflation, stagnation or depression, make life appear impossible. As such, expansion is linked to extraction, exploitation and expropriation

(Fraser 2016) that are experienced across a wide corporeal and psychological terrain through: increased workloads; demands for knowledge exchange, research impact and commercialisation; internationalisation strategies aimed at opening-up new markets; casualisation and precarious employment; intersectional inequalities in promotion and tenure; attacks on pensions and wages; demands for more innovation in (online) teaching; and, the sanctity of data and algorithmic control in setting strategies (Morrish and Sauntson 2019).

The driver for constant revolutionising is the desire for universities to increase the value of academic commodities, by reducing the quantity of intellectual labour that is socially-necessary for their production and circulation in the market. This might be the time for knowledge transfer, to turn around marking, or to develop and deliver an accelerated degree. These quantities of time can be measured and compared, and against a given, global, average level of productivity, institutions can undercut this average through intensification and gain competitive edge. Thus, in the struggle for student fees, research funding, and college rankings, enriching certain forms of high-value University labour is immanent to outsourcing or proletarianising low-value work.

Low or high-value work contains differential technical compositions, based upon the skills, knowledge, capabilities, technologies, data and organisation required to undertake it. These differences and their value are brought into relation in the market, where the quantitative value of a specific commodity or activity is determined by abstract (homogeneous) human labour measured by time, rather than its concrete (heterogeneous) social purpose. Teaching may be seen as a humane activity but it is more easily conditioned by precarious practices than high-impact research, through the control of workload and timetabling in the name of value-for-money for students, as cost-focused consumers.

This places its humane content at risk, or forces academics to overwork to deliver that humane content, as the prescribed form of the timetabled curriculum reduces teaching to components of time that can be compared. At the level of the discipline, where some fields are deemed more productive of economic value than others, there is a transfer in available time and cross-subsidies from low-cost fields (Newfield 2016). Moreover, this reduction in the quantity of time for specific activities also increases demands for further innovation, new research grants, to exploit new markets, or for academic specialisation through teaching or research-only contracts.

Time as a form of academic domination is reinforced ideologically by the desire for data that promise enriched monitoring or tracking of performance, alongside behavioural changes (Williamson 2020a). Data again reinforce how the symbolism of the University is predicated upon the imaginaries of a network or ecosystem of external actors, who work to shape its forms, pathologies and methodologies. Flows of data enable new quantifications of University work, underpinned by a machinery of global production that disassembles existing flows of labour, finance and technology, and reassembles them for profit or rent. The fusion of new technologies and technocratic modes of organising work creates new forces and relations of production, which coalesce as the Platform University. Fusing technologies, flows of data and quantification, behavioural science, and algorithmic governance, also reinforces white, colonial and patriarchal hegemonic norms, for instance in the use of biometric surveillance, like facial recognition, to normalise particular behaviours on campuses (boyd 2017).

In the Platform University, the reason for and purpose of existence connects to algorithmic control as the movement of Right (Hegel 1942). This is the search for transhistorical certainty,

in the refinement of capitalism as *the* spirit that explains and gives energy to human endeavour. It promises to finesse a controlled ecosystem for collecting rent, enabling and distributing human capital, and exchanging commodities, and thereby providing the system with transhistorical and sustainable means of expansion. This is the *alpha* and *omega* of capitalism as a system of reproduction. For instance, integrated platforms enable universities to impose *fexploitation* through the creation of micro-activities or micro-commodities in relation to the production of curriculum content, research outputs, assessments and so on (Huws 2014; Morgan and Wood 2017). As intellectual work becomes more precarious and entrepreneurial, its particular nature comes into relation with algorithmic control as a moving, capitalist Reason or spirit. This spirit appears systemic and able to be optimised *for-value*, and as such it is an *inhuman* power, driving intensification and proletarianisation in the struggle for *both* the accumulation of value *and* increased rates of profit (Marx 1844/1974; 1894/1991).

This spirit is the liberal symbolism of the University *for* the development of human capital, spill-over activities, knowledge transfer, entrepreneurship, impact, and so on. This symbolism determines the idea of the University in relation to commodity exchange, private property, the division of labour and the market. Yet, it represents and reproduces the hopelessness of life in the universe of value. In response to this, we require an examination of how the University is reproduced in relation to a totalising system that demands expansion, but which is also in permanent crisis. It is not enough to examine the University and its place in an economic sector, because this simply leads to tactical finessing of policies and practices framed by tropes of social mobility and widening participation. Finessing does nothing to generate a politics for refusing the pathologies and methodologies of the University as its forms are insinuated inside a system of exploitation.

Thus, the argument developed herewith is not *for* the University, rather it is *against* what the University has become. It questions liberal conceptions of the institution as a social or public good, and instead highlights the non-neutrality of the University as it reproduces exploitation, expropriation and extraction. It highlights how, under conditions of crisis, be they of environment, austerity, Covid-19 or Black Lives Matter, the University has become a hopeless space, because it can *neither* fulfil the desires of those who labour within it for a good life, *nor* contribute solutions to socio-economic, socio-environmental or intersectional ruptures. This idea of hopelessness is developed dialectically, situated against the political realities of the return of struggles for alternative worlds. These are witnessed in calls for racial, indigenous, environmental and epistemic justice, which centre human agency and the ability to make history. Such calls refuse the imposition of particular modes of living by those with both abstract and concrete power and privilege. It is important, therefore, that we are able to contest such privilege as it is reproduced inside the forms of the institution, and through contestation, to consider the potential for reimagining intellectual work as a movement for other worlds.

The value of the University-in-crisis

The latest financial crisis to impact capitalism, triggered in 2007 and generalised with the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008, has been used to justify further commodification of life under austerity politics. Through this justification, the University been really subsumed inside the evidenced-based imaginary of the market (Hall and Bowles, 2016). On the one hand, it is treated as an input, or a means of production, into a wider economic system that has come to dominate life. On the other hand, it is treated as a material representation of a chronically and historically-failing system, to be infiltrated by consultancies working in the name

of agility, innovation, productivity and value-for-money (Bevins et al. 2020). Infiltration is accelerated by the systemic inability to catalyse new forms of accumulation, coupled with *both* the need to generate surpluses of time, labour, value and money, *and* the demand to find new outlets for a mass of inactive, financial surpluses. These generate:

- a flood of new credit, for instance, student and institutional debt that reinforce a financialised, political ideology;
- a focus upon infrastructure projects, often sponsored by corporates or philanthrocapitalists, based upon brand management and a desire for productivity by increasing the organic composition of capital (i.e. increasing the amount of fixed capital that an individual unit of labour can put to work);
- hoarding surpluses for investment in infrastructure, rather than on intellectual labour, with a concomitant denigration of collective bargaining;
- a policy focus upon productivity and the development of human capital, grounded in entrepreneurship and commercialisation;
- data-based control of staff and student performance; and,
- the ongoing separation of institutional governance and sector regulation, from the production of ways of knowing the world.

The working conditions of University labourers are reduced to an economistic common sense, with political decisions about the institution delivered through a tenured bureaucracy. Struggles

against this common sense become a movement *against* the incorporation of staff and students as factory-based cogs in industrial production, rather than *for* their roles as intellectual workers (Chuang 2019a).

The inability of the University to work beyond the parameters set by capitalist social relations has been laid bare by the Covid-19 pandemic. In this moment, the generalised, epidemiological threat to human bodies has demonstrated that the validity of dominant, social institutions like the University rests upon the needs of commodity production, circulation and exchange. For those with access to networks of privilege and resources, who tend to occupy particular positions in the division of labour, it becomes easier to weather the storm of the pandemic. This storm forces those on precarious contracts, who are predominantly younger, female and black or of colour, into work, rather than being able to provide for themselves by working from home. Moreover, established policy and popular narratives around education reinforce the common-sense reality that education serves economic activity, and so the narrative stresses that schools and universities must reopen.

Through the pandemic, economism has been thrown into asymmetrical relationship with the corporeal need for human survival, as competing institutions and their regulators seek to mitigate or adapt to its impacts and maintain economic activity. Beyond the initial closure of campuses, the crisis management of the end of academic sessions, no-detriment policies and mitigation activities for students, the argument is shaped by fears of institutional and sector-wide illiquidity and bankruptcy. As a result, this coronavirus crisis has been overlain on top of the secular crisis of capitalism, revealed as a long depression in which value-production and accumulation stalled, and has amplified its reduction of the meaning of life to productive work (Roberts 2018).

This places the desire for value into asymmetrical relation with humane values. As educational policymakers and institutional leaders make plans for reopening institutions, independent scientific groups called for practices aimed at a Zero Covid University and a Covid-Safe Student Experience (The Independent Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Independent SAGE) 2020). Elsewhere, staff and students fear that they will be writing obituaries (Notre Dame, Saint Mary's & Holy Cross Observer (NDSMHCO) 2020) or argue that institutions are at risk of violating their legal and moral responsibilities (Chitty et al. 2020). In trying to balance this, some sector and institutional leaders have attempted to open-up debate about financial mitigation, predicated upon restructuring in the search for value. In relation to Covid-19, attempts at mitigation or adaptation have included calls for bailouts in the UK (Universities UK (UUK) 2020a), or claims about deepened localisation, digitisation and austerity in the Asia-Pacific area (PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Singapore 2020). These focus upon maintaining the content of business-as-usual and preserving its institutional forms, with University workers expected to bear the costs, through restructuring, new workload models, and increased pressures for commercialisation and knowledge transfer work.

Calls for preservation through restructuring, merging or federating have been interpreted as academia's new shock doctrine (Kornbluh 2020). This reflects the material and historical reality that crises of capital demand sacrifices, in order to release idle or unproductive skills, knowledge, capabilities and infrastructures from sectors, businesses and individuals deemed less useful or with lower productive potential (Marx 1894/1991). Covid-19 has reinforced the symbolism of the University for-value, and as a site for the commodification of education, rather than for humane, intellectual work. It has reinforced the symbolism of the University

as a factory that increasingly, if unevenly, internalises the realities of capitalist production, and inside which individual lives, hopes, histories and relationships must be sacrificed (Sotiris 2012).

In spite of the shattered confidence and faith in the structures of everyday social interaction, the pandemic illustrates our difficulty in escaping the symbolic power of capitalist social relations (de Sousa Santos 2020). Through the inability to reimagine their purpose, coupled with anxious exhaustion about the pandemic, University workers are reduced to tactical struggles, for instance, against the invasion of work into homelife and its impact on caring responsibilities. As capital overlays the crisis of the pandemic on top of ongoing financial crisis, it further colonises the home and social reproduction. Beyond this, crises of the environment and struggles for Black and Indigenous lives reveal the University operating inside monopolies of power that delegitimise self-care beyond narratives of deficits and resilience, and the need to manage risk. Instead, these monopolies impose structural adjustment that scars individuals and communities.

Structural adjustment and hysteresis

Structural adjustment erupts from the dynamics of capitalist social production, as crises and the need to reproduce value place stress on individual, regional, national and sectoral economies. The treadmill of competition between businesses like universities, operating inside sectors like higher education (HE) that are brought into interdependence with other sectors of the economy, governs responses to shocks. Against risks reported in forecasts of reduced fees from international, domestic, and postgraduate students, limited research funding, and low net cash inflow as a result of Covid-19, institutions: planned redundancies; capitalised upon distance or online provision; refused to furlough staff on fixed-term or part-time, hourly paid contracts; asked staff to take

pay cuts; intensified algorithmic management and communication systems; and, reopened, accelerating community infections (London Economics 2020; Workers' Inquiry Network (WIN) 2020). These innovations amplify competition, which in turn changes the organic composition of universities, with demands for more infrastructure and technology to be mobilised by fewer workers operating under worsening labour conditions.

As the University lifecycle, driven by the circuits of capital, is ruptured by the uncertainties of the lifecycle of the coronavirus, extant structural and intersectional injustices have been intensified (Blundell et al. 2020). In the desire for business-as-usual, it is impossible for capitalist time to slow or stop, in order for humans to understand their emerging material (corporeal and psychological) and historical (temporal) relationship to the virus. The abstract world of capital, mediated by money and markets, appears to have more power than the concrete world of the virus. Hence, responses are predicated upon the balance of risk between physical and economic death, measured against the possibility of new waves of the pandemic and new lock-up measures (Oxford Economics 2020).

Yet those very responses are also affected by hysteresis, or the permanent structural, corporeal or psychological scarring caused by an event. So, the generalised transmission of Covid-19 into the human population creates effects that manifest themselves as persistent problems in established systems of social reproduction. For instance, economic growth or output cannot rebound back to a pre-crisis trend line, because that would require accelerated and impossible levels of production. The new trend line for economic output, already reset in the aftermath of the last financial crisis, and having to contend with environmental degradation, cannot recover lost surpluses or surpluses that were predicted but never made. Thus, the GDP that should have been available for services

or investment is permanently lost. Growth may return to a long-term rate of expansion, but, without a rebound back to the pre-crisis trend-line, there is permanent scarring (Cerra and Saxena 2018).

Hysteresis makes a nonsense of ideas of business-as-usual or a return to normality for universities, as cash flow, operating income, turnover, surpluses, output are each reduced and cannot be recovered. Neither access to new cohorts of students from the global North and South, for whom study offers an alternative to a lack of available work, nor the promise of low-cost, technological delivery, can offset these generalised losses. Here, the crisis of value and the struggle for surplus take the form of enhanced competition over student enrolment, especially domestically, and this threatens the reproduction of institutions with less social, cultural, intellectual and financial capital.

Intersecting crises lay bare the inadequacy of the University as a carrier of meaningful, public intellectual activity, precisely because, *in extremis*, less productive and valuable institutions are forced to consider structural adjustment. In England, policymakers have implemented restructuring regimes that make bailouts conditional on strict conditions that align with government policy (Department for Education (DfE) 2020). In North America, calls for temporary bailouts and assistance for institutions or students, like the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act in the USA or Canada's Bill C-15 including Emergency Student Benefit, come with conditions set by the permanent requirements of finance capital. Across economies and universities, the pandemic further tests eligibility for public support, based upon instantiating new relations and forces of production, like mergers, federations, homeworking or hybrid forms of delivery. Moreover, it also relegates or repositions established research and public engagement activities, for instance around climate forcing,

by foregrounding activities that are valuable.

In responding to hysteresis, competition and ranking systems drive institutions at the core of HE sectors, represented by research-intensive institutions that are export-driven, prestigious and international, to accumulate or compensate for lost income at the expense of institutions at the periphery. These latter tend to be over-leveraged against specific student or debt markets, and in turn work to replace more expensive University labourers with those who are cheaper, and to deploy more technology (Hershbein and Kahn 2018). For University workers, the result is *either* further anxiety in an age of heightened uncertainty and risk (Morrish and Priaulx 2020), *or* increasing cynicism about the academic project (Allen 2017).

Under the rule of Covid-19, one option would have been democratic planning and governments bearing the risk of uncertainty for institutions, with the speed of transition to new ways of working underwritten by cheap credit, central management of infrastructural investment, or bailouts with limited conditions. Instead, the market and private investment remain pre-eminent, thereby skewing socially-needed investment towards that which is behavioural, incentivised and economic (Bossie and Mason 2020), with reductions in the portion of Government funding for public universities. Market coordination is maintained with institutions owning uncertainty and risk, in relation to: first, student recruitment and markets, operating activities and research; and second, the development of new forms of organisational development and entrepreneurial activity.

This is the structurally-adjusted, symbolic common sense of public HE. For University workers, it shapes a pathology of powerlessness, reinforced by calls for self-sacrifice that are increasingly integral to the reproduction of liberal society. Thus, Covid-19 means that academic staff are expected to plan for *both*

fully online *and* hybrid future delivery, whilst also delivering the same quality of education and value-for-money. In managing these risks, the metabolic relationship between public and University is regulated for-value rather than for humans. As global labour markets are forcibly adjusted under the pandemic, a new, structurally-adjusted normal scars workers, who are unable to imagine the possibility of making their own history.

The University at The End of History

The immanence of viral and financial pandemics has thrown the imaginaries upon which we base our understandings of the world into confusion. The global intersection of coronavirus and Black Lives Matter protests inflects economic populism, protectionism and the rise of the alt-right, the politics of austerity, climate forcing and metabolic rifts, and creates a new historical and material terrain of struggle (Particles for Justice 2020). However, the symbolism of capitalism denies humans any horizon of possibility beyond *its* continued accumulation and organisation of social life. In this view, history has ended because capitalism and its institutions are natural and transhistorical, and in this *End of History* our imaginations cannot process alternatives (Fukuyama 1992). Yet, reinforcing crises have called this into question, such that at *the end of* The End of History (Aufhebunga Bunga 2021), there is a renewed tension over whether it is easier to imagine the end of the world (and of our humane values) than it is the end of the capitalist University (and its drive for economic value)? (Jameson 1994, following Franklin 1979.)

The argument here is that the University is emblematic of the collapse of the power and potential of humans to reimagine the world. Even whilst they enrich the general intellect of society, or our collective wealth in skills, knowledge, capacities and capabilities (Marx, 1857/1993), University workers have not been

able to imagine how such enrichment might operate beyond mediations like the market, which seem to form an impregnable realm or kingdom (de Sousa Santos 2020). Instead, those workers tend towards complicity with the acceleration of a society defined technocratically and in economic terms, at great cost to those who labour inside it and who are left competing for scarce privilege, status and power.

At *The End of History*, institutional and disciplinary structures create textures or forms of value, whose content and commodities are created: first, through cultures revealed as pathologies of overwork, self-harm and self-sacrifice that are habitual and compulsive (Hall and Bowles 2016); and, second, activities of teaching, learning, research and administration that describe methodologies for control and performance management (Birmingham Autonomous University (BAU) 2017). Inside these forms, the pathological and methodological content of the institution is internalised by the University worker and their ego-identity, thereby diminishing the potential for mutuality. Differential levels of proletarianisation in the conditions of labour, shaped by competition over status, militate against the creation of common ground between University workers.

It remains difficult to develop a counter-hegemonic academic project, precisely because of the divisions between: professoriate; tenured academics; precarious academics striving for tenure; early career researchers working to accrue intellectual capital; professional services' staff who define much of the policy, organisational, technological and data-driven terrain of the institution; and students. Marx (1867/2004: 96) was clear that 'while the class struggle remains latent or manifests itself only in isolated and sporadic phenomena', capital will maintain its power. Finding ways to overcome differential levels of proletarianisation and broaden moments of solidarity is crucial in understanding

the University workers' class composition and their contribution to class consciousness.

Even so, struggles do continue to erupt from within these divisions, demonstrating the deep antagonism between University labourers and their institutions and sectors. These include:

- academic labourers in a dozen institutions in the UK, fighting cuts during the pandemic in 2021;
- graduate students at the University of California, Santa Cruz, taking part in wildcat strikes since 2019 to demand living wages;
- the 2012 student protests in Québec against debt and the imposition of Bill 78 limiting dissent;
- struggles in 2019 at the University of Juba in South Sudan against tuition fee hikes that threatened the right to education;
- the history of protest at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, including the 2016 sedition row, and 2019 struggles over accommodation fees and India's Citizenship Amendment Act;
- struggles for decolonisation, like Rhodes Must Fall at the universities of Cape Town and Oxford, alongside the educational activities of Black Lives Matter;
- movements against sexual violence on campuses, including the work of the 1752 Group based in the UK; and
- campaigns at Harvard for prison and fossil fuel divestment, since 2018.

In spite of these struggles, at *The End of History* the University is still painted as a liberal institution that simply needs reform, rather than needing transformation or abolition (Meyerhoff 2019). Reformism maintains the reified, symbolic power of the University and laments its bastardisation alongside the toxic development of performative managerialism. Such lamentations cannot trace the links between institutions under capitalism, which collectively reproduce a terrain of intersectional and liminal injustices (Motta 2018). The determination of this terrain is grounded in values and modes of performance represented by white, colonial, patriarchy, and these are the grounds upon which the institution, its disciplines and individuals are judged and performance managed. Thus, University work symbolises the separation of the political economy and humanist potential of intellectual activity. At *The End of History*, that labour is governed by policy obsessed with productivity, efficiency and value-for-money (Ansell 2020), which has such power and such inertia that resistance tends to be diffused or dissipated.

Elsewhere, scholars engaged in the field of critical university studies have identified how, in governance, regulation and funding, HE is not working, and instead they look for solutions that recover or redeem the idea of the University (Connell 2019). Analyses have: applied a range of historical models to the sector (Brandist 2016); focused upon particular fractions of academic labour, like professors (Evans 2018); highlighted enclosures through discourses of policy and language (Morrish and Sauntson 2019); and, centred upon the acceleration of the Platform University (Hoofd 2017). Alternatives include: recovering ‘the public university’ (Holmwood 2011); building educational co-operatives (Winn 2015); recovering reified norms of academic freedom (Furedi 2017); refining the idea of the University in relation to the market (Frank et al. 2019); or, considering the social and ecological futures of the University

and its publics (Facer 2019). Here, the University is seen to be an anchor point for social re-imagination that needs to be re-centred away from dominant, neoliberal discourse.

These counter-narratives tend to describe organising principles that desire a better University, framed by hope, love, care, solidarity, and so on. They form a terrain of outrage, but they tend to lack a deeper, categorical analysis of either the forces or relations of production that discipline, and give texture and meaning to the University. There is limited possibility for a critique that situates University work against its basis in alienated labour (Hall 2018), through which the ‘vampire’ of capital reproduces itself by feeding upon living labour (Marx 1867/2004). Moreover, they risk preserving hegemonic imaginaries that are not mindful of intersectional and indigenous experiences and ways of knowing the world. This limits our collective engagement with radical imaginaries (Elwood et al. 2019), subaltern struggles (Harney and Moten 2013), or structural disadvantage (Darder 2018), and instead it reinforces how the University has become a failed or impossible redeemer (Allen 2017).

At *The End of History*, the flow of capitalist time reproduces a global, exploitative, cognitive caste system that is reinforced by the liberal imaginaries of universities in the global North, their disciplinary separations, and their claims to knowledge-as-truth. These claims: are systemic and algorithmic; centre around particular determinations of effectiveness and efficiency; and, are able to be fine-tuned to reinforce a trajectory of timeless growth. In part, this is how the University’s forms, pathologies and methodologies amplify the compulsion for algorithmic modes of control. It is how universities have been able to use abundant living labour to move online during the pandemic, and thereby create new platform ecosystems at low short-term cost.

In this narrative, there are questions around whether the

University is too fragile to cope with the future impacts of financial crisis and pandemic, and needs accelerated and agile re-engineering. The World Bank report on *Global Waves of Debt* (Kose et al. 2019), and International Monetary Fund report *Debt Is Not Free* (Badia et al. 2020), highlight the vulnerability of sectors and economies that are over-leveraged, and in which profitability and investment is assumed under low interest rates with precarious or surplus employment. A separate World Bank Group report (2020: 7) on the pandemic shock and policy responses highlights the need to generalise ‘innovations and emergency processes, [so that] systems can adapt and scale up the more effective solutions.’ Regardless of economic or psychological scarring, at *The End of History* turning ‘recovery into real growth’ becomes yet another opportunity for capital to impose its shock doctrine of structural adjustment (Munevar 2020).

In response, University disciplines are reduced to highlighting inequality and associated policy responses, or analysing the psychological impacts of economic instability (Collier 2018). In general, the forms, pathologies and methodologies that reproduce the University cannot enable a world beyond capitalist social relations. This is reinforced by the divorce between the politics and governance of the University and its deterministic, economic symbolism. At *The End of History*, the intensification and fragmentation of work, shaped by a loss of co-operation beyond competition, scarred by precarity, and oriented around value rather than humanity, generates hopelessness.

The reproduction of hopelessness inside the University

Institutional responses to the pandemic, climate forcing, austerity, Black Lives Matter, amongst other crises, have tended to project responsibility onto individuals or their teams, both for managing their resilience, or sustaining the value of programmes of study

and research. However, these crises are also used to justify cuts and re-engineering. As institutions and sectors use crises to accelerate commodification, there is a risk that a new hopeless or depressive position subsumes autonomy, and withers hope (Iorio and Tanabe 2019), or living concepts like *hygge* inside the University (Larsen 2019).

The University worker's position is rendered more hopeless where they can see that induced behaviours are incongruent with the values of their inner being. These are enforced through toxic sanctions, surveillance or performance management. This is the logic of the University, in which all potentially sensuous or meaningful activity is objectified as powerlessness and self-loss. Those who work within the University increasingly face an intense sense of *Weltschmerz*, or a world weariness that lies beyond anxiety, anguish or ennui. This recognises that the concrete world of hope, love, care, solidarity and kindness continues to be shaped competitively, abstracted for economic value. As such, the academic, student or professional service worker struggles to embody their deeper humanity in the world (Hall 2018).

In the reproduction of the capitalist University this struggle catalyses hopelessness in two senses. The first lies in the inability of the University to address crises other than through the imposition of authoritarian forms of management, pathological cultures of growth or business-as-usual, and methodological activities that fixate on commodity-exchange. It has therefore become a useless use-value, in the sense that its social worth and its feasibility are defined by flows of capital, in which the creation of a liveable environment for humans is secondary. Here, the form of the hopeless University has become devoid of useful content.

The second sense lies in an understanding of how capital structures and disciplines University work, feeding off it as a labour of love, negating its humane possibilities, and as a result breeding

despair, depression and melancholy as a space beyond anxiety. Any hopes that universities might be places for the creation of new forms of freedom, self-actualisation, social wealth, or even public good, are marginalised by the imposition of precarious existences inside anxiety machines that catalyse overwork and ill-being (Hall and Bowles 2016). These are amplified by the harassment, marginalisation and discrimination felt by certain bodies, alongside cultures of silence. Increasingly, those who work inside universities have *either* to become self-exploiting or self-harming, *or* to deploy enough cognitive dissonance to overcome the lack of authentic belief that another world might be possible.

Dissonance is harder to maintain as academic work becomes more explicitly remade for-value, and determined in the market, in relation to the production, circulation and accumulation of academic commodities. Work on academic capitalism highlights the interplay between managerialism, policy and practice in leveraging new income streams, for instance, through: the commercialisation of biotechnologies, life sciences, financial technologies and data, and artificial intelligence; transnational education and the new colonialism of branch campuses, distance learning, joint and dual degree programmes, and fly-in faculty; and, building a rentier economy from the commodification of academic services (Birch et al. 2020; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004). For some University workers this potentially catalyses splitting or dissociation of the Self, as institutional demands that their work delivers business benefits, value-for-money and competitive advantage, threatens their desire to engage in intellectual work as a movement of dignity. At issue is whether such split identities might be re-integrated, and whether they might enable an authentic reintegration of science and philosophy, self and other, subject and object, and politics and economics. Might this enable new forms of knowing, doing and being in the world, rather than

of exploitation? This process of reintegration at the level of the individual and their communities focuses upon sensuous human activity for worlds beyond value.

Inside institutions that reproduce structures/forms, cultures/pathologies and activities/methodologies that are withering, a starting point is sitting with hopelessness as a trigger for authentic grief and mourning. Rather than uncritical hope, or defensive lamentation for an idealised, historical and public place, this process of grieving demands that labourers understand how hopelessness is reproduced inside the University. Grieving opens-up how the University reinforces objectification and the denial of subjectivity, such that its workers become habituated to inhumanity. These are reflected in recent analyses of: the Zombie University (Smyth 2017); the Automatic University (Williamson 2020a); the University in ruins (Readings 1996); the Psychotic University (Sievers 2008); Whackademia (Hil 2012); the University as a ruined laboratory (Dyer-Witheford 2011), or a branch office of conglomerates (Derrida 2001); terminal subjectivities in HE (Allen 2017); the need to hospice the University (Andreotti et al. 2015); and fugitive existences in the University (Harney and Moten 2013).

The hopelessness theory of depression is useful in framing these metaphors through the relationship between depressive symptoms and the loss of agency, alongside the amplification of individual vulnerability inside environments that reproduce negative imaginaries (Schneider et al. 2012). Inside institutions like universities which govern themselves overtly and covertly through endemic intensification, self-harm, shaming, performativity, and intersectional injustices (Ahmed 2017; Gill 2009), it is possible to analyse the development of vulnerability using Chabot's (2018) work on global burnout. He focuses upon the impact of overwork, alongside mental and physical exhaustion, in relation to values-

driven, service-work. This is especially the case in sectors that are performance managed around excellence, and whose metabolism is defined as a struggle over scarce resources, status and privilege. Chabot (2018: 12) states that burnout ‘replaces the richness of a healthy relationship between individuals and their work with an immense void of meaninglessness’.

Here, hopelessness has a layered complexity linked to an individual’s inability to consider future positives, such that a negative miasma or contagion generates vulnerability (MacLeod et al. 1993). Inside highly-competitive environments, vulnerability also tends to shape a deeper relationship between defeat, entrapment and depression (Tarsafi et al. 2015). Persistent and seemingly inevitable negative events become ‘occasion setters’ that can trigger hopelessness (Abramson et al. 1989). These might include negative student assessments, being overlooked for promotion or tenure, daily micro-aggressions, an unmanageable workload, limited research grant success, and so on. Particular forms, pathologies and methodologies shape environments in which negative outcomes come to be expected (Abramson et al. 1989; Abramson et al. 2000). These have been described in a range of literature about quitting (*quitlit*) and illness of ill-being (*sick-lit*) (Hall 2018).

Hopelessness, powerlessness and vulnerability are amplified through histories of patriarchy, colonialism, exclusion, and intersectional injustices, which engender cultural and political depression (Fitz-Henry 2017; Xiao et al. 2014). It is important to recognise the differential ability to exist without hope, or to withstand structural injustices that limit individual agency. Intersectional injustices are reproduced inside forms, and by pathologies and methodologies that question the legitimacy and value of certain bodies (Ahmed 2017). As such, tactics for survival pending revolution, cynicism, stoicism, apathy, refusal,

becoming fugitive, exodus, or organising have tended to describe the boundaries of personal agency in hopeless ecosystems like universities.

Sitting with and believing these injustices uncovers ways of knowing the Self in relation to the structural inequalities and textures of the institution that enforce splitting or dissonance. In offering the potential to understand issues of trust, agency and voice, this is central in enabling individuals to recognise the impossibilities of working in a divided, competitive environment. Moreover, such knowing validates individual and collective struggles against a range of negative events, as well as refusing discourses that frame some bodies and identities as useless, underperforming, or devoid of entrepreneurial, impactful or excellent endeavour.

Thus, whilst pessimism might more accurately describe the *Weltschmerz* felt by many staff and students (Abramson et al. 1989), hopelessness becomes a useful heuristic for analysing the forms, pathologies and methodologies designed to exploit labour inside the University. Hopelessness places the individual, her environment and her society into asymmetrical relationship, rather than focusing upon the individual's learned helplessness or psychological deficits. This takes the particular evidence of increased occupational health referrals, reports of mental distress, and suicides, not as individual failings, but instead as moments for reconceptualising those experiences at the level of the University (Morrish 2019).

The collective, academic capacity to do this work of critique was questioned half a century ago by Le Baron (1971: 567): 'I could exhort my fellow academics to work within academia towards a new consciousness, transcending habits of egoism, competition, and possessing, but I am all too conscious of Marx's biting attacks on such "idealistic" and "utopian" methods.' More recently,

Szadkowski (2016: 49-50) argued that ‘the hierarchically organized community of scholars is a rather non-antagonistic force to capital’. It may be that University workers in the global North need to look to subaltern labourers for strategies that militate against this hopeless hierarchy. For instance, some have discussed how to hospice the organisation as it passes away (Andreotti et al. 2015), thereby framing an ability to sit with hopelessness, or to exist without hope, in order to prioritise authentic *being* in the world. The acceptance of the hegemonic University as a limited and limiting space, whose content is hopelessness, helps its workers to understand the ways in which the University seeks to impose control. Moreover, it is generative of analyses of the ways in which hopelessness ruptures the Self inside the capitalist organisation. However, this requires a dialectical mode of interrogation to mark out new paths.

Dialectics of hopelessness

The hopeless University emerges through three dialectical moments (Dunayevskaya 2002; Lenin 1981). First, an engagement with thinking that brings *universal* concepts into relation with *singular* experiences, in order to question *particular* structures, cultures and practices, and thereby generate new universals. This is a movement of thinking that situates the symbolism of the institution against the range of ways in which it is imagined in practice, in order to move towards a concrete understanding of its reality. It also places those existing structures of the institution, alongside its cultures and practices, in relation to the totality of capitalist social relations. Second, an elaboration of the relationship between quantitative and qualitative change. The experience of life inside the University is subject to constant measurement and the attempt to validate conceptual clarity about the world through evidence or data that are a quantity of experience. At particular moments,

quantity describes qualitative change, and new types of measures. For instance, the pandemic accelerates the quantification of the student experience, and this shapes conceptualisations or discourses of efficiency or value-for-money.

There are also social relations immanent to these qualitative changes, and which challenge the relation of data to discourses, and the reproduction of power and privilege. Thus, Hegel (2010: 179-80) noted how ‘number stands between the *senses* and thought’, helping to develop ‘the category of the internally self-external that defines the sensuous’. The concrete world experienced by individuals is brought into relation with symbolic, external contexts through mediations like the market that require particular modes of measurement. The conditions of our self-actualisation are material and sensuous, but they are validated inside a system normalised around white, colonial and patriarchal performance and prestige.

Quantitative tipping points can be reached, enabling qualitative change to shift cultures and perceptions. For instance, struggles over the killing of George Floyd have included deep questioning of the complicity of universities in structures that perpetuate exploitation, expropriation and extraction. This offers a moment of conceptual or psychological negation. This is the third dialectical moment, the law of the negation of the negation. Thus, calls for state-funding for HE under Covid-19, or for institutions to make reparation for the legacy of slavery, negate the sanctity of private property and the unfolding consumption of education-based services. These open-up a discussion of the potential abolition and transcendence of the University-as-is. This reveals the contradictions between the private and public function of a degree, which leads to further questioning of the idea of the University.

This dialectical unfolding of particular, concrete experiences of

the world, like the ability to study in a pandemic, is brought into relation with universal conceptions that normalise and stabilise thinking, like business-as-usual. Yet there is transformatory potential in this unfolding. Whilst Hegel (2018) raises the idea of an external, sensuous consciousness, which gives energy to the ongoing movement of society, Marx (1867/2004: 103) inverts this, arguing that humans make the world through practical, sensuous activity and struggle, and that the key is to 'discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.' The symbolic power that we attach to particular descriptions of the world, and our dissonant imaginings of our interactions with it, demand dialectical thinking. As Marx (1867/2004: 102) argues, 'the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of [humans], and translated into forms of thought.'

Thus, in response to intersecting crises, there is potential for generating meaning beyond the objectification of education for the development of human capital. Realising *both* that the University is implicated in shaping our social relations, *and* that our social relations are implicated in shaping the University, frames the possibility for negating: the structures/forms that shape University work for-value; the cultures/pathologies of the University that exploit our relationship to nature, the environment and each other; and, the activities/methodologies that are alienating. At the end of *The End of History*, a struggle over subjectivity erupts for University workers who are told that uncertainty can be controlled through algorithmic control and self-sacrifice, but for whom the development of certainty is immanent to their consciousness of that environment as hopelessly alienating.

The return of history is the return of human agency and potentialities. This includes a negative, dialectical critique of social existence inside the University. As a result, it is possible to reveal subjectivity mediated by the relationship between

the labourer and the objects of their consciousness (including workloads, learning environments, technologies, peers). These are determined materially and historically by particular forms of social existence, mediated by private property, commodity exchange and the division of labour. These deny the validity of singular, intersectional, intergenerational and intercommunal experiences, beyond particular norms against which they are measured. At issue is whether those experiences can be brought into direct relation with each other, so that the humanity of their differences might form a qualitative tipping point able to negate their alienation through struggle.

Struggle demands a many-sided analysis of social forces, political actions, relations and forces of production, in order to understand what is possible. The requirement is to abstract concrete qualities from different objects or experiences, like inequitable workloads or analyses of attainment gaps, in order to generate new abstractions or universal conceptions. This brings individual, singular characteristics into direct relation with the totality of social existence, and potentially offers new modes of negation, or social transformation. This is not idealism, rather it is a materialism that questions capitalism's transhistorical claims to bourgeois equality (Marx 1875/1970), and its imaginaries of social mobility, equality of opportunity and meritocracy. Such questioning reveals the deep, structural inequalities embedded within a totalising system. Thus, it becomes possible to bring diverse imaginaries of hopeless and powerless experiences in the University into relation with its symbolism as a mode of organising capitalist social relations. In response, it is possible to imagine the negation of, for instance: the commercialisation of research as private property; the status and privilege of the academic division of labour; and, intellectual competition rooted in commodity-exchange.

It is then possible to imagine the abolition of the hopeless

University and the legitimacy of its forms, pathologies and methodologies for intellectual work. Abolition aims at sublating or assimilating and overcoming barriers to human living, in order that an alternative world becomes possible. This negative, dialectical mode of thinking is important because the Spirit (or Reason) of capitalist social relations that controls life is abstract and symbolic, as well as being imagined or experienced concretely and brutally (through precarity, overwork, ill-health, and so on). By thinking of the University dialectically, a negative possibility emerges from the diversity of experiences, which pushes beyond the historical and material symbolism of the University-as-is. Instead, the potential for qualitative change is situated as transformational (Adorno 1966).

Dialectical thinking reveals subjectivity as a constant movement of becoming, in which categories of life are brought into comparison and contradiction. In this movement, pandemics, austerity, climate forcing and Black Lives Matter highlight two antithetical conceptions of life. The first is calibrated around capitalist institutions that impose a totalising movement of value, and which measure difference and diversity against hegemonic norms. This is the Reason of capitalism. In the second, life emerging from negative dialectics (ibid.) raises the possibility for alternative conceptions that cannot be synthesised from particular (white, male) identities and their non-identities (made marginal). This recognises that subjectivity is formed from ontological and epistemological imaginaries grounded in difference: I am me because of you and because I am not you. It is the refusal to abstract difference around dominant modes of quantification and measurement that forms humane connections. This is the potential for unity-through-difference.

Such heterogeneous thought offers boundaries that determine the return of a historical and material dynamic, as a movement

of sensuous human activity in the world. Here, ‘the consistent consciousness of nonidentity’ (ibid.: 5), reproduces the world through the reality of individual differences, rather than exploiting, expropriating or extracting from those identities. Struggle is crucial in this process of creating a world of unity-through-difference, rather than imposing separations between people based upon differences, in order to maintain capital’s expansive logic. Thus, struggle for unity based upon difference is predicated upon the potential for rupturing and transcending the imposition of labour as *the* mode of social organisation. In analysing the struggle for authentic intellectual work at the end of *The End of History*, this is the starting point for transcending the symbolism of the hopeless University.

The University at the end of The End of History

The duality of financial and viral pandemics has exposed the fraud at the heart of narratives of meaningful intellectual work at *The End of History*. It exposes the fraud at the heart of the structures, cultures and activities of universities in the North Atlantic, whose pathological and methodological content reproduces space-time for-value, rather than humans. Capitalism as *the* means of social organisation continues to be ruptured by intersectional, temporal and geographical injustices that erupt from points of labour and points where labour touches society. A range of indigenous resistances, struggles grounded in race, gender, disability and class, emergent revolts against toxic ecological policies and climate forcing, resistance to economic and political populism, form a movement that places the institutions of capital in stark opposition to humane values. Through struggle, the political economics of capital’s war on labour are revealed, and enable ongoing critique.

For University workers, critique centres the institutional inability to respond meaningfully to this re-emergence of history, beyond

unilaterally declaring business-as-usual in the face of Covid-19, or noting a climate emergency whilst remaining implicated in the consumption of fossil fuels. At the end of *The End of History*, when the abstracted power of capital has revealed its pollution of systems of life and living, the hopeless University demonstrates the inferiority in its soul. It is dominated by strategies for public engagement, internationalisation, teaching and learning, research, sustainable development, which collapse the horizon of possibility, and that are limited to algorithmic, bureaucratic solutions to insoluble, structural and systemic positions. The hopeless University is a flag bearer for a collective life that is becoming more efficiently unsustainable.

In response, this book questions whether the University might contribute to a transformation of society away from capitalism, *either* through transitional, political demands such as for the co-operative University, or by contributing to the possible communisation of society through its abolition and the liberation of its knowledge, skills and capacities. It questions whether transition or abolition are feasible at the end of *The End of History*, and whether it is possible to move beyond fetishised labour in the University, to reimagine radically the purpose of knowledge production in a world under extreme duress. This carries the argument against the corporate University, towards knowing the world beyond the horizon of hegemonic political economy in an age of intersecting socio-economic and socio-environmental crises.

The need for a transformation in social relations, built upon an imaginary for a post-work society in which the realm of necessity is subservient to the realm of freedom, is pivotal in this thinking (Gorz 1982). The symbolism of the University is a key site in any transformation, because it offers a terrain in which the productive knowledge, skills, capacities and relations of society might be generalised rather than commodified. However, this demands the

radical, humanistic reimagining of intellectual work in society as an open critique for a new political economy, based upon opening-out our knowing, doing and being beyond the commodity.

Therefore, this book connects with the idea that mutuality and voice point beyond hopelessness. As Adorno (1966: 17-18) noted, 'The need to let suffering speak is a condition of all truth. For suffering is objectivity that weighs upon the subject'. The argument carried forward here speaks of the suffering imposed within the structures, cultures and activities of the University, as their shifting forms are immanent to pathologies and methodologies that define their content. As a result, we open-up moments of struggle, grounded an understanding of how the University demands the internalisation of anxiety and its projection into the world as fear. These moments are a means to recover a more authentic sense of what the Self might be in the world (Bloch 1996). The argument is in solidarity with projects that wish to abolish the University-as-is, and that reject the idea that a better capitalist University, like a capitalism that works for everyone, is possible. The structures that take a form appropriate to the reproduction of the content of the world for-value militate against a liveable life. They must go.

In this, hope is not the starting point, rather yearning for a new path emerges in a critical reconnection of the idea of human-as-intellectual, with *both* the human-as-psychological *and* the human-in-nature. It does not emerge from within the University alone. It demands solidarities between the range of academic and professional services staff, and students, and in making connections to struggles at the level of society. As a result, the reintegration of human capacities inside individuals, rather than their separation for the purpose of identification, performance management, knowledge exchange and transfer, impact, and disciplinary entrepreneurship, becomes possible. The separation of human capacities enforces a one-sided appreciation of life, and

fetishises the idea of intellectual work, which becomes kettled inside specific institutions.

Central to the argument in this book is the potential for alternatives grounded in a dialectical understanding of how our imaginaries are entangled. In revealing how value and values, hope and hopelessness, privilege and precarity are interwoven, it is possible to disentangle our selves from their alienation. Here, the metaphor of composting or breaking down that which is dead to us, and recycling nutrients for new ecosystems and subjectivities emerges. As history returns, our ability to compost the hegemonic symbolism of the institutions that further our estrangement from active knowing, doing, being and becoming, enables their foreclosed ontologies and epistemologies to be refused and negated (Holloway 2016). Instead, understanding and recognising singular experiences of the structures, cultures and activities of the University, enables commonalities and points of solidarity in those experiences to be uncovered. That this emerges from a range of perspectives, which are each being subjugated and proletarianised through the universal and totalising power of value, points towards the potential for unity-through-difference as a new mode of organising social life.

In refusing the idea of the hopeless University, indigenous, feminist, decolonial, queer, disabled, intersectional conceptions, counter-cartographies and narratives offer guides. These counterpoints frame intellectual work in relation to the body, soul, psyche, collectivity and nature, through the past, present and future. This moves us from functional analyses of our near-term extinction (Bendell 2018), to a discussion of what it means to live well in this moment, and the potential to discuss alternative, plural horizons of possibility (Cleaver 2017; Elwood et al. 2019). At the end of *The End of History* such horizons of intellectual work are described in relation to 'the only scientific question that remains

to us...: how the fuck do we get out of this mess?’ (Holloway 2010: 919).

The symbolism of the hopeless University is a limit to any meaningful transformation, because it is structured around forms, pathologies and methodologies for the commodification and mediation of intellectual work. With no categorical analysis of this symbolism, labourers idealise hope, and yet hope is no plan. Rather, a dialectical process of transcendence is needed, which highlights the one-sidedness of knowledge, institutions and disciplines as limiting factors in self-determination (Dunayevskaya 2002). This is a moment of courage, which recognises the need to know authentically, plurally and differentially the diseased and pathological context for suffering inside the University. A next step asks whether it is possible to forgive the University, and take responsibility for how we feel about it. Instead of being dominated by the University, projecting our own hopes and fears onto it, and internalising its modes of privilege and performance, this might begin the process of focusing upon intellectual work as sensuous, practical activity in common.

This book proceeds through six further chapters, as follows. In the first, there is an analysis of *hopeless struggles* inside the University. As the institution has been re-engineered in relation to the law of value, and the process of subsumption situates the University inside a transnational geography of accumulation, the very idea of the University is emptied of political, democratic content, and instead reorganised around surplus. The University has become a key site for reproducing the separation of polity and economy through authoritarian performance management. This relentless process can only be met by hopeless struggles inside the University, or a retreat into helplessness.

These hopeless struggles are then analysed in three core chapters. The first of these chapters, *forms of hopelessness* imposed by

institutional structures are discussed, alongside corporate forms, governance arrangements, management and leadership structures, and regulatory arrangements. In the next chapter, *pathological hopelessness* unpicks the diseased, pathological cultures of the University represented through its normalisation of cultures of ill-being, overwork and privilege. In the latter of the three core chapters, the *methodological hopelessness* engendered by everyday academic practices that are enforced by toxic managerialism is developed dialectically. Emerging from an analysis of the intersection of these forms, pathologies and methodologies of hopelessness is a *movement of the heart*, grounded in the ability of labour to awaken to its predicament both inside a crisis-driven institution, and at the level of society. This centres the relationship between dialectics, entanglement and composting what-is, for alternative paths.

The book closes with a discussion of those paths, as a new mode of yearning at *the end of The End of History*. As history returns, we must have faith in our antipathy towards what-is, and its forms, pathologies and methodologies, and question our desires for the University. In addressing intersecting crises, we must ask the following questions. How have we been betrayed by the University-as-is? In this sense, what is this University not capable of becoming, being, knowing and doing, in the face of crises? Can revealing the University as an anxious, abject, hopeless space, distorted and exploited by capital, enable us to define other worlds? Are other, socially-useful forms of intellectual work possible?

Hopeless struggle in the anxiety machine

In the pre-pandemic University, overwork and ill-health were increasingly reported as deeply intertwined amongst professional services staff, academics and students. For staff, a proliferation of technological processes alongside a raft of institutional and national bureaucracy, for instance, in relation to teaching and research audits, have amplified the administrative pressures that exacerbate workload inequalities. The latter include taking on a range of roles in relation to the management of the curriculum, assessment and the student experience, like personal tutoring, admissions, open day working, alongside pressures to recruit more students without increased staff numbers. There is also an increasing emphasis on: international and placement activities; public engagement; income generation and research impact; managing the student experience in relation to national metrics around satisfaction; and, meeting accelerated expectations of institutional time management, for instance in the turnaround of student assessments.

Moreover, there are an increasing number of *both* innovation *and* University citizenship activities that fold on top of business-as-usual for professional services' and academic staff. These

include: piloting new processes or technologies; implementing accreditation projects to address racial or gender inequality, such as the Race Equality Charter or Athena Swan in the UK; mentoring and peer review in relation to research ethics or research bids; and, work in professional societies or with journal editorial boards. Across the terrain of business-as-usual, innovation and citizenship activities, a non-exhaustive list reproduces an expanding terrain of hopelessness, inside which the University labourer is expected to maintain their value.

Yet these activities are entangled with a culture that tends to scrub University workers of any autonomy over the labour process, in part by ensuring that competition appears to be a natural human state. Resistance appears futile in the face of the ‘silent compulsion of economic relations’ (Marx 1867/2004: 899). Decision-making and control over the tempo and loading of work, which would traditionally have been devolved to academics, is increasingly managed bureaucratically rather than collegiality, and based upon a weak understanding of the realities of academic labour, in terms of time allocation and sequencing (Converso et al. 2019). Individuals or groups lack agency or power in refusing speed-up and instead face increased demands upon their time, especially those who are precariously-employed or casualised and who have traditionally lacked the collective privilege to reject such working conditions. These also include those with caring responsibilities who have tended to be held back through, for instance, a hegemonic work-family narrative that does not square with stalled advancement and long work hours (Steinþórsdóttir et al. 2017).

The pandemic has amplified and made visible *both* the lack of collective privilege for certain groups, *and* the lack of solidarity across the whole class of academic labourers. Across the global North, networks of precarious staff struggling for employment

rights have built upon existing struggles over casualisation, inequality in labour rights and pay, access to paid holidays, and so on (Corona Contract 2020; National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) 2020; WIN 2020). These issues are compounded for precarious staff with caring responsibilities, who need to travel to fulfil even limited face-to-face contractual duties, who are shielding, or who lack access to reserves and must work. Here, the class composition of University labourers, grounded in differential layers of status, privilege and access to resources, reduces the possibility for mutual, associational struggle.

In part, this lack of solidarity reinforces estrangement inside institutions that depend upon anxiety as a dynamic force or mode of expansion. *Both* the methodology that drives University activities *and* the pathological need for value-for-money and efficiency, reinforce overwork and ill-being, as individuals and departments compete for resources. Whilst they will be addressed in subsequent chapters, it is important to signal that the University takes forms that catalyse pathologies or cultures and methodologies or activities, and which describe it as an *anxiety machine* (Hall and Bowles 2016). Rather than poor mental health, rising anxiety and depression, embodied illness, reports of staff and student suicides inside educational institutions being situated as the outcome of a singular lack (of resilience), in the anxiety machine these are actually structural outcomes.

Increasingly, ideas of good mental health and productivity are intrinsically linked, and being entrepreneurial in personal resilience is imperative. In a society that prioritises surplus-value over humane values, to be otherwise is sinful. This pivoting of well-being and ill-being around individual practice and performance, is also seen in the proposed incorporation of 'mental health into performance regimes' (UUK 2020b: 17). The risks here to both staff and students ignore the wider, structural issues that underlie

poor mental health, and which turn universities into pressure vessels (Morrish and Prialux 2020).

Unfolding distress is witnessed in the growing number of narratives from both students and staff, framed through depression and anxiety, and situated against structurally-alienating conditions of life. This takes the form of: the quitlit of individuals leaving HE (Barcan 2019); established academics attempting to make sense of performativity (Ball 2015); reports of the suicides of students, the precariously employed, and the tenured (Lew et al. 2019); and, accounts of the health implications of an audit culture (Morrish 2019). In these narratives, staff recount the pain of constantly having to reinvent themselves through student satisfaction scores, relentless demands for publication and impact, entrepreneurial activity and knowledge transfer, workload and performance management, and so on. As O'Dwyer et al. (2018) argue, overwork becomes a motive force and self-care withers.

Academic and student distress has been explained away as the consequence of a scholarly vocation that adapts poorly to the realities of marketisation. Yet, as Tokumitsu (2014) argues, 'Few other professions fuse the personal identity of their workers so intimately with the work output.' As HE is re-engineered around commodity production and exchange, marketisation and financialisation ensure that this fusion takes place under circumstances of both chronic and acute anxiety. University workers, including students, are subject to exploitative and normalised, anxiety-driven overwork as a culturally-acceptable self-harming activity. Thus, relocating the discussion of mental ill-health as pathologically-inherent in the weak, and widening the examination of the role that anxiety plays in the re-engineering of the University as a business, is crucial, because:

the anxiety currently manifest in higher education is not an

unintended consequence or malfunction, but is inherent in the design of a system driven by improving productivity and the potential for the accumulation of capital (Hall and Bowles 2016: 33).

Without an analysis of structural factors that catalyse expanded circuits of anxiety inside the University, conversations about student and staff mental health are meaningless. This is more so given the demographic realities of differential access to status, privilege and surplus. Inside pathological and diseased cultures of overwork and over-performance, anxiety about position and judgement (made externally and reinforced through internalisation of performance management) becomes a motive force. This is exacerbated by the public performance of workaholic professors, whose practices recalibrate the work of those around them.

Anxiety about position forces individuals to question: am I a good academic/University citizen? Am I productive enough? For staff on casualised contracts, or for whom tenure or promotion matters, there is an internalised judgement of 'am I working hard enough?', and an externalised projection onto others of 'are you producing enough?' Inside the anxiety machine, it is impossible to be productive enough, and therefore good enough, and there is always the threat of a reserve army of surplus labour that disciplines those in post (Marx 1867/2004). Through this threat, the anxiety instilled through competition at every level militates against solidarity and co-operation, because work is a battle of all against all (Engels 1845/2009). The defining, status-driven impulse is to increase personal value as an entrepreneur, demonstrated through the traces left in publications, leading research bids, managing agile innovation projects, or blogging and emailing at all hours. As a result, staff and students are locked into a toxic system, which reproduces reified, anxiety-infused identities. This leaves individuals all played out, as they search for competitive

edge.

In part, this is a competition over time, and more especially the time it takes to produce a commodity. Where performance is based on making labour time more efficient, there are collective implications for workload and expectations on a global scale. This work is also conditioned in the market through the commodification of the University, and its attendant financialisation. However, speed-up exacerbates the loss of space and autonomy, whilst it also catalyses the defence of scarce or fragile power and prestige. This amplifies and transmits anxiety throughout the academic *peloton*, reinforced through surplus-focused, performance indicators, impact and satisfaction metrics, and discourses of student-as-consumer.

Anxiety as a permanent state of exception inside teams and individuals is immanent to the reproduction of the University as a social form designed to maintain a particular, repressive and ideological, material existence (Althusser 1971). It is conditioned by the 'metric assemblages' (Burrows 2012) of State-based funding and regulation. This audit culture demands the internalisation of measurement as symbol of academic castration (Shore and Wright 2015). For The Institute for Precarious Consciousness (2014):

Today's public secret is that everyone is anxious. Anxiety has spread... to the whole of the social field. All forms of intensity, self-expression, emotional connection, immediacy, and enjoyment are now laced with anxiety. It has become the linchpin of subordination.

Across HE, this forces staff to reflect on the anxiety induced by imperatives for productivity and intensity, and to be open about the cultures of *omertà* (the silence of those in the know), which enables staff and student mental health to be damaged. Moreover,

there are intersectional manifestations of ill-being that demand attention, including what Smith (2008) highlights as racial battle fatigue amongst African American men attempting to navigate and survive inside historically White campuses.

This also reflects on the psychological stress of constantly having to validate and assert one's Self, or to struggle for indigenous education (Tuck 2018; Tuck and Yang 2012; Tuhwai Smith et al. 2018). With the focus upon the achievement and performance of students of colour/black students, HE's expectation of faculty of colour/black faculty also becomes a potential site of ill-health. There is an invisible workload of emotional/affective labour, where small fractions of faculty end-up servicing the needs of larger fractions of students with whom they are seen to identify. The layers to these forms of emotional and psychological distress, are framed by realities of alienation, legitimacy, silencing and visibility (Motta 2018).

A meritocratic framing of hopelessness in the anxiety machine

Anxiety shapes struggles: for access to free education as a social good; for civil rights and the idea of decolonising; for environmental sustainability, including struggles with indigenous communities; and, against misogyny and sexual violence. However, these tend not to be situated against the capitalist mode of production, and the asymmetrical relationship between labour and capital inside the University. For many academics, there is an inability to understand their labour in relation to a broader strategy that recognises the hegemony of Friedman's (1955) argument that:

[Education is] a form of investment in human capital precisely analogous to investment in machinery, buildings, or other forms of non-human capital. Its function is to raise the economic productivity of the human being. If it does

so, the individual is rewarded in a free enterprise society by receiving a higher return for [their] services.

One outcome is the lack of a categorical understanding of educational immiseration underscored by social and economic impoverishment (Hall 2018). Blinded by tropes of meritocracy, there is an acceptance of transnational immiseration and low-skilled, low value-added, routine jobs, without a critique of how the same processes are infecting the University as an anxiety machine. In particular, this affects those casualised or made second-class citizens inside the University, through contractual vulnerability, being made invisible, lack of control and agency, denial of structural narratives, and institutional short-term planning in response to financial and epidemiological crises (Megoran and Mason 2020).

The symbolism of a University built on merit in the allocation of scarce resources works against those whose lives demand boundaries between work and not-work, because of other responsibilities, like caring (Amsler and Motta 2017). This shapes levels of membership and prestige in the University community, and mirrors Bourdieu's (1988: xxvi) analysis of the French professoriate in relation to: first, those who were oblates, akin to laypeople or late clergy affiliated to a religious community, but not necessarily a part of its circle of privilege; and, second, those with tenure who shape and are shaped by the University community. This University community is maintained through myths taken for certainties, and the imposition of particular forms of performance that maintain, control and govern the appearance of the academic to the public.

The idea that status-driven academia is a meritocratic and sanctified community, makes the scramble for tenure more hopeless. In the UK, it is argued that in 2017/18 there were almost 70,000 'atypical', casualised teaching and research staff, or staff on zero-hours contracts, and this 'has become a business model

on which universities depend' (Megoran and Mason 2020: 6). Actively reproducing this surplus and reserve army of labour: first, places a negative downward pressure upon labour conditions and wages across the sector; and second, disciplines those with tenure precisely because a cheaper labour force is always available, containing individuals with high-levels of expertise. Managers can maintain an insecure army of labour through casualisation, and also intensify workload and labour processes.

Through this division of labour, it appears that evidence, science, technology and organisational development are the catalyst of invention and progress, which are then transferred into new material forces of production. This means that

All our invention and progress seem to result in endowing material forces with intellectual life, and in stultifying human life into a material force. All this antagonism between modern industry and science on the one hand, modern misery and dissolution on the other hand. (Marx 1856/1969: 501)

Intensification leads to: first, the squandering of time, skills and capacities, alongside physical and psychological energy; and second, the loss of solidarity as individuals, disciplines, research teams and institutions become estranged. Solidarity demands a negative understanding of the social world of the University as an anxiety machine, in order to stand against the fragmentation of individual and collective identities (Holloway 1995). Fragmentation is accelerated through deficit models that deny structural analyses of the categories that underpin hopeless labour in the University, and instead pin failures on an individual for their lack of human capital, ability or effort.

Thus, there exists the need to understand how reformist positions merely engender hopelessness, in the form of consent,

co-option, limited foci for resistance, the refusal to engage in workers' inquiries, and an engagement with well-being, coaching, mentoring, self-improvement, appraisals and so on. Anxiety as the essence of University work is entangled with the appearance of merit based upon entrepreneurialism, and a blindness to existences of subordination and conditioning based upon alienated labour, and its commodification, privatisation and separations. As Marx (1894/1991: 182) noted:

it is only through the most tremendous waste of individual development that the development of humanity in general is secured and pursued... Since the whole of the economising we are discussing here arises from the social character of labour, it is in fact precisely this directly social character of labour that produces this waste of the workers' life and health.

In the capitalist University ideas of merit in a competitive system generate an enterprise of dehumanisation, reproduced through reward and recognition, performance management, value-for-money, productivity, and self-exploitation. This enterprise informs and is informed by the social character of University labour. For some, there is a privileged distance from casualisation, although their work is at the same time increasingly proletarianised. For others, there is a tension around the need to assimilate to the concrete realities of the anxiety machine. It may be argued that in these normalised, hegemonic spaces, *both* struggle *and* survival are heroic acts.

The immoral economy of the University

In writing about food-riots in eighteenth-century England, EP Thompson (1971: 78) argued that too many historians, committed to explaining growth and progress, 'are guilty of a crass economic

reductionism, obliterating the complexities of motive, behaviour, and function'. For Thompson (ibid.), intellectuals attempting to understand the complexities of community action, under the duress of local, regional or national crises such as access to means of subsistence, were guilty of a reductionist, 'abbreviated view' of people. At issue in explaining communal action, is the idea of a legitimising notion for action, in terms of a deeply-held belief in the defence of 'traditional rights or customs' that connected to 'the wider consensus of the community' (ibid.).

Here, legitimation at the level of the community stands in asymmetrical relation to authority, as a form of *moral economy*. Action might be allowed by the authorities, but the agency of the crowd demonstrated strong elements of independence, rather than fear or deference, and activated grievances against particular practices. Legitimacy, consistency, social norms and obligations, maintaining established economic functions, each interacted 'to constitute the moral economy of the poor' and an 'outrage to these moral assumptions, quite as much as actual deprivation, was the usual occasion for direct action' (ibid.: 79).

Whilst the moral economy emerged through the assumptions of community, it was shaped in relation to the encroachment of private property, a market economy, and the need to generate surpluses. Through such encroachments on the idea of the common, impersonal relationships and impoverished working and living conditions are generalised, as market-based institutions revolutionise norms, assumptions and traditions, and use disciplinary or intellectual force to impose new modes of reason (Krader 1974). Instead of seeking the means of life through direct association, the manipulated scarcity of the commodity and the market re-purpose values, beliefs, assumptions, cultures and morality. Processes of subsumption enable the capture of existing relations of production for capital accumulation, followed by

their re-engineering for the generation of surplus value through competition (Marx 1867/2004). For Thompson (1971: 136), this was the immanence of the ‘breakthrough of the new political economy of the free market’ and ‘the breakdown of the old moral economy of provision.’

This enables a reflection upon the immoral economy of the University, which legitimates a new common sense, grounded in the universe of value. Gramsci (1971) distinguished between: first, ‘common sense’ as a contradictory set of shared values, activities, relations, cultures, norms and obligations governed ideologically; and, second, ‘good sense’, as a movement beyond *common* sense towards a critical reading of the individual-in-community, that is coherent. In the University, isolation and disorganisation have enabled visions to be normalised around efficiency, employability, entrepreneurship, impact, satisfaction and value-for money. Circulated through an environment mediated by the market and economic reductionism, and amplified through the weaponisation of the student experience, the thick ties of the academic community that might enable good sense as a critique of the capitalist University and its place in social reproduction have been diminished.

The immoral economy of the University is one outcome of the process of subsumption, which weakens critical research and scholarship, whilst it reinforces the norms of common sense, market-mediated activity. Processes of performance management and managerialism amplify intersectional injustice, and seek to mediate the political content of the institution through behaviour change, rather than collegial dialogue or negotiation. Thus, authority tolerates dissent until it impacts its labour processes and modes of knowledge production, at which point it mobilises disciplinary and ideological power. Moreover, the ideological power of the prestige economy of the University, alongside the

splits in the class composition of intellectual workers, ensure that coherent, moral economic responses are impossible. There is no crowd or community to offer anything other than localised, tactical responses to immorality.

Where struggles do take the form of moral protests against everyday assaults on working conditions, they lack a deeper, categorical critique of those assaults as a means of further alienating labour-power (Hall 2018). They form valid, tactical attempts, for instance: to enhance pension rights; to recalibrate workload and staff-student ratios; to pay a cost-of-living wage; to reduce zero-hours work and casual contracts; to reduce technocratic and bureaucratic control; and, to increase academic autonomy, freedom and decision-making. However, they tend to lack a more radical engagement with the counter-hegemonic struggle at the level of society. This means that particular experiences are asymmetrically related to common sense visions of economic growth as a necessity. Mired in a desire for evidence-based reform, they remain unable to describe paths away from this universalised common sense, through critical engagement that uses those particular experiences as a critique of capitalism, rather than the excesses of the capitalist University (After the Fall 2009).

Increasingly, struggle is situated against institutions shaped in opposition to any moral, intellectual economy, precisely because those institutions value and make valuable a complexity of information, data, programmes, processes, and policies codified into a system of corporate control. The ecosystems of the institution have become mandatory, regulatory and risk-based, connected to the justice of market efficiency, and propagated by policy wonks, analysts or consultancies. As a result, the symbolism of social justice cannot escape the imaginary of the economy, and alternatives are collapsed into culture wars, for instance, in terms of academic radicalisation (Allington et al. 2019). Moreover, the

demands of transnational finance capital dissolve and remake social relations inside the University and its ecosystems, in order to reinforce subjective ideas of what is morally legitimate.

Of course, other models exist, for instance in the practices of Cuba's municipal universities, connected to economy, society and environment (Fariñas Barrios and Cano 2019; Jover et al. 2016). Yet, the moral legitimacy of the University is set in relation to specific forms of financial, economic power, and the material history of the University is remaindered by forces of accumulation and processes of managerialism. In turn, this widens the gap between intellectual life and the ability to solve capitalism's reproduction crises. The contradictions of the University are accelerated through the involvement of finance capital and are made concrete in struggles against marketisation. However, the struggle against labour remains hidden for many University workers, unable to recognise their work as alienated labour (Hall 2018; Marx 1844/1974). The tendency is to lament what has been lost, in the form of pay, tenure, pensions, rather than to reveal new paths, grounded in the abolition of that labour and the system that reproduces it.

The obsession with lamentation and loss is dangerous because it tends to ignore how the breakdown of neoliberal governance is recalibrating capitalism around pathologies of revenge (Haiven 2020). These pathologies maintain inequality and exploitation, in terms of identity-markers like race, disability, sexuality, gender, alongside expropriation through ongoing colonisation and oppression. For Haiven (*ibid.*), the radical path is made possible through proletarian, feminist and anti-colonial struggles, which highlight how the violent use of power is integral to the reproduction of capitalist institutions. Struggle must accept the broken symbolism of the University and reveal how it: takes retribution against bodies and minds that crack through excessive

workloads (Canaan 2008; Morrish 2019); forces academics to look for self-care against structural inequalities (O'Dwyer et al. 2018); and, reproduces forms of expropriation and exclusion, based upon intersections of gender, race, disability and sexuality (Darder 2018).

Power lies in the articulation of this immorality, by relating singular experiences of exploitation in the University to the particular norms against which those experiences are judged. This pushes back against the universal truths of surplus and value that constitute common sense. It generates new forms of good sense defined collectively, which are reminiscent of Marcuse's (1969a: 326) post-68 analysis of the *revolutionary subject* as that group or class capable of risking all to replace the system, because in that system they have nothing. Inside the University, this is not those who fetishise tenure, because they have not been proletarianised enough to look beyond what-is. Moreover, these individuals lack the levels of consciousness to drive transformation, precisely because their struggle is *for* specific demands related to the labour process, rather than *against* social reproduction as a whole. Activity cannot shape a class *für sich* (for itself), because of the divided, fragmented composition of University workers: partially-unionised; partially-privileged; some with tenure and some without; reproducing evidence-based disciplinary truths; engaged in research that reinforces the disciplinary nature of the State; divided through a hierarchy driven by performance; and increasingly conditioned in relation to student debt.

The labour conditions of the University deny autonomous potential, through processes of automation, augmentation, data mining, self-service and the unbundling of activities (Dyer-Witheford 2015), which fragment class solidarity. Yet, whilst the symbolism of algorithmic power enables the University to contribute to the reproduction of hegemony, by aligning the idea of society with its material, technological base, the history of anti-

University activity is important in pushing against the legitimization of particular, intellectual and disciplinary activities (Neary 2020; Roggero 2011). This history is not a *positive* response to inequality, which in turn still tries *for* a better University. Instead, it frames a ruthless, *negative* critique of the structures, cultures and practices of the University that negate our being and our potential to live well (Marx 1843). It is a struggle against the immoral economy of the University and its system-justifying myths.

In taking the institution as the object of analysis, there exists the potential for a new morality focused upon human situations, needs and yearnings, which has the potential to liberate knowing as a practice, rather than subordinating knowledge to particular, historical social powers. As Streek (2016: 170) argues, such object-oriented analysis highlights the asymmetry of social power relations that appear ideologically to be technical necessities to which there is no alternative. In terms of Covid-19, such necessities formed a ‘pandemic swerve’ (Mitropoulos 2020), which refused arguments that reopening universities was high risk, or a vast and unplanned experiment. In spite of reports of campus closures following reopening in the United States, for instance at the University of Notre Dame, or of the quarantining of students, for instance at the University of Alabama, and a subsequent pivot online, populations of staff and students are treated as ‘stock’ in demands to ‘reopen the economy’.

These technical necessities reinforce and are reinforced by: the disconnect between academics and those in leadership positions (Erickson et al. 2020); ‘a macho agenda’, in which narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellian activity mix (Perry and Miller 2017); opening-up new markets, driving down costs, erecting capital-intensive infrastructure projects, constant restructuring, and an obsessive focus upon performance metrics and league tables as a kind of fantasy sports league (Spooner 2017); the deep,

structural inequalities over which bodies have to attend campuses during the pandemic, and which can reproduce their working lives from home; and the tolerance given to patriarchal, white and *value*-driven positions. In these ways, the capitalist University seeks to integrate variable capital (human labour-power) and constant capital (means of production, infrastructure) to create terrains for exploitation that despoil the planet in the name of progress.

This is Hegel's (1942: 196 S207) reminder that in any social system, 'A man actualises himself only in becoming something definite, i.e. something specifically particularised; this means restricting himself exclusively to one of the particular spheres of need.' (NB given the focus here on men, I do not change the pronoun.) However, Hegel also argued that any happiness stemming from such a definitive particularity was contingent on acts of assistance and 'relatedness' (ibid.: 197 S209). In a system dominated by *private wants* this contingency has been weakened. Moreover, our ability to see our humanity connected to an 'infinite personality', as an ongoing mode of personal education and validation, is also weakening (ibid.), such that we impose hierarchy, privilege and status as forms of 'abstract right', which give transhistorical power to an immiserating system.

Against such abstraction there is a need to build radical political consciousness and practices *from* those groups that are placed outside or on the margins of these technical necessities, be they feminist, indigenous, decolonial, or precarious, or engaged in widening the space of social reproduction beyond the factory (Norton and Katz 2017). These are formed of those communities suffering the expropriation of their present and future, grounded in that of their past. Yet, at present, this feels impossible because the withering of solidarity inside universities sits in asymmetrical relation to the ways in which capitalist social relations colonise

differentiation and particularity, and limit consciousness through narratives of productivity and human capital. These narratives merge in relation to the hopeless universality of education for the market.

The political economy of hopelessness

The immoral economy of the University reflects the political economy of HE, which operates behind the backs of University workers. The generalised lack of a categorical understanding of how their labour shapes the world generates a tendency to focus upon the symptoms of helplessness and hopelessness. An inability to engage with a restless, negative critique of University work as labour, instead viewing it as privileged and prestigious, tends to push individuals towards recuperating the public University as an end rather than a transitional demand. There is also an inability to cut through intersectional injustices, to reveal their commonalities in the labour processes of institutions. As a result, initiatives like education for sustainable development or decolonising are seen as ends in themselves rather than immanent to anti-capitalist struggle.

The question becomes how to decompose this labour. How do professional services' staff, academics and students analyse their conditions and relations of production? The singular situation of the worker is their starting point for analysing their relation to their work process, the things they produce, their society and themselves. It is a starting point for resisting the fragmented nature of solidarity, which is itself a function of a labour process that is constantly being transformed in relation to value as a means of reproducing the autonomy of capital.

In Marxist analysis, value (and labour's value to Capital) is a critical category (Cleaver 2017). Value emerges in the production process through the exploitation of labour-power as a commodity,

and by integrating the form of value created by labour with abstract labour, or the generalised, comparable quantity of labour (Clarke 1989). Essentially, the labour-power of the academic is their capacity to mobilise their skills, knowledge and capabilities, in order to generate a surplus. This might be in the form of a high impact journal article, the development of human capital in PhD students, or knowledge transfer. Each of these forms of value can then be generalised or compared across individual academics, departments and institutions. Through this generalisability, it is possible to abstract the value of singular teaching and research activities against particular measures, such that individuals and teams might generate surpluses in the form of rents, research income or student recruitment.

The ability of labourers to set technology, resources, infrastructure, data, and so on to work, is enhanced through organisational development and co-operation predicated upon the division of labour. However, it is also enhanced through an institution's social, intellectual, cultural and financial capital, reinforced historically and materially through legacies and league tables, and which catalyse strategies for access and participation, internationalisation, and so on (Bracio and Szarucki 2019). This also tends towards *both* specialisation *and* the development of a tripartite system of proletarianised roles. In the first, commodity skills are readily available and are ripe for outsourcing or automation, like certain administrative functions. As curriculum processes are unbundled, the need for specialisation is reduced, as are labour costs. In the second, leveraged skills requiring more advanced education offer added value, but they are placed under stress through the growth of a surplus population. These include certain technical and information management skills, and also teaching-only or research assistant work. In the third, proprietary skills, which generate surpluses through new intellectual property

and commodities, are *both* scarce *and* valuable.

Whilst certain bodies are increasingly tenured inside institutions, because they hold or generate value through proprietary skills, others face a more precarious existence. Through global labour arbitrage, universities ensure that commodity and leverage skills are outsourced/automated, and that their costs are driven down. Those who hold low-value skills are threatened with becoming non-subjects, without access to an existence based upon waged work (Woland/Blaumachen and friends 2013). Thus, the compulsion is for performative environments designed around: enriched skills, knowledge and capabilities that can be commodified; the intensification of work by expanding its scope; and, the automation of processes by subsuming work into technology. Legitimacy is given to activity that validates value-production through self-exploitation, entrepreneurship, spill-overs, commercialisation and incubation, and by relating it to externally-imposed metrics and local performance management.

The distinctions between absolute and relative surplus-value are central to analyses of the forms and content of University labour, and a key terrain is time. Marx (1867/2004: 126) reminds us that value is ‘an inhuman power’ that dominates human time. The University working-day forms: first, the necessary labour required to enable the labourer to re-produce their costs as wages: and second, the additional or surplus-labour that can be materialised as surpluses (potentially as money). In more under-developed capitalist production processes, like the fee-driven context of English HE, universities primarily strive to increase the absolute amounts of surplus-value that can be produced and accumulated. This happens by extending the working day, or by locating new international or corporate markets from which to accumulate.

This process of searching for absolute surplus-value generates overwork, but it also reaches limits, in terms of the length of

the working day or limited academic skillsets. These limits, alongside the underdeveloped market/financial mechanisms and higher levels of collective bargaining, mean that there is limited innovation that can reduce *socially necessary labour time*. Rather than being conceived of as units of labour measured in hours or days, *socially necessary labour time* is conceived as the amount of labour time required by a worker of average productivity, working with tools of the average productive potential, to produce a given commodity. In the HE context, more-skilled staff reduce the average time and increase productivity, whilst unskilled workers contribute less social value. As a result, universities see the application of more productive technologies or techniques that restore competitive advantage.

This pursuit of relative surplus value attempts to make superfluous any labour (teaching, assessment, scholarship, administration, research) that is unproductive, and to speed-up operations (Barcan 2019). By revolutionising the forces and relations of production, new labour relations and working conditions generate efficiencies and thereby lower *socially necessary labour time*. Innovating universities have the possibility to produce more surplus-value relative to those with which they compete, in part because of the new capability and in part through increased capacity (generated by efficiency savings). This imposes further labour market flexibility and work reorganisation, and University work becomes realigned in ever more fragmented ways (by developing acute disciplinary and teaching/research specialisms, or by chasing the next precarious contract). As innovations are generalised and relative surpluses reduce, further labour-related transformations are normalised.

The result is a particular terrain of super-exploitation grounded in the concentration and rationalisation of production through new technocratic assemblages, management methods, workload

agreements, absence/attendance management policies, and so on. This has also been underscored during the pandemic by a policy terrain that predicates government intervention upon restructuring, mergers and shared service provision (DfE 2020). Crises like the pandemic enable a radical restructuring and rationalisation beyond the incremental possibilities of public policy reform, enabled nationally and enacted locally (Corona Contract 2020; University of California San Diego, Faculty Workgroup on Budget Priorities (UCSDFWBP) 2020).

One outcome is the tendency to increase the pressures of immiseration and a lack of autonomy in the academic labour process (Wray and Kinman 2020). Such pressures are a function of life in a dynamically-unstable system, in which morality is validated by competing institutions in the market. Individual self-transformation is immanent to the social power of the HE system, and this dominates individuals who must constantly reproduce their labour-power to survive. Work may actively express the individual's singular life, but it does so in order to secure an existence that is constantly under threat of being made obsolete (Marx 1857/1993).

Although institutional forms rest on narratives of research- or teaching-intensive brands, in reality, competition reflects the movement of absolute and relative surplus-value, in response to crisis. Whilst the contradiction of an academic life appears to lie in the balance of research, teaching and administration, its essence is revealed in: first, the University's need to reduce the costs of the academic labour-power that drives commodity production and exchange-value (*socially-necessary labour time*); and second, the University's need for new, entrepreneurial and creative labour. This underpins the constant revolutionising of the forces and relations of production, and the demand for constant reskilling, overeducation and overwork (Di Paolo and Mañé 2016).

This spills-over into wider society, because the University is socially-useful as a means *both* of production *and* for generating productivity. Marx (1867/2004: 175-76) argued that the rate of profit is affected by the social character of labour, the division of labour, ‘and the development of intellectual labour and especially in the natural sciences’. This ‘entire system’ is available to the capitalist, but crucially, the development of productivity through new skills, knowledge and capacities in sectors that supply means of production, cheapen those means of production (as socially necessary labour time is reduced) and this enables profits to rise. Through professional development and performance management, it is possible to address the social desire for work-ready skills, entrepreneurship, and accelerated degrees, rooted in the ‘transformation of the intellectual quality of living labour’ (Vercellone 2007: 29).

Against this, arguing for pay equality or against casualised forms of labour appears hopeless. Equality and freedom depend upon the logic of capital, which develops particular ‘juridical, political, social relations’ (Marx 1857/1993: 245). These are predicated upon the production, circulation and accumulation of commodity capital, as value-in-motion. For Marx (1844/1974: 102), this was a movement of private property, which underpins competition. Even in academia, intellectual property rights, copyright law, employment contracts, and so on ensure that University labour represents ‘the material sensuous expression of estranged human life’ (*ibid.*). Calibrating institutions around such processes of commodification tends to accelerate alienation.

The commodification of hopelessness

Marx (1867/2004: 125) notes that ‘The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an “immense collection of commodities”; the individual commodity

appears as its elementary form.’ The commodity is the starting point for Marx’s critique of political economy because it enables processes of social production and reproduction to be analysed in relation to the basic building block of capitalism. Holloway (2015) argues that Marx’s focus is upon: first, the materialisation of wealth; and second, the realisation that it is only under capitalist production that the commodity infects society and diminishes human relations (Krader 1974). This idea of infecting is crucial, precisely because predicating social bonds upon the production, circulation and accumulation of commodities as forms of private property generates inhumanity because it objectifies people and centres things.

Discourses like human capital and productivity, deform the concrete conditions inside which University workers labour, and objectify that labour through: first, the compulsive production of commodities in the form of new personal tutoring services, attendance monitoring data, journal articles, workload planning algorithms, impact case studies, ratings for professors, and so on; and second, the use of commodities to reduce the risk to the institution in relation to national and international measures of success. This generates one-sided identities, precisely because specialisation is less of a systemic risk. Risk is reduced as value is increased, and as such the context inside which new services, deliverables or outputs are created is irrelevant (Köpsén 2020). Instead, primacy is given to the comparability of both those services and the institutions inside which they are incubated, and the creation of institutional infrastructures and forms of total quality management to govern risk profiles.

In the production of commodities, socially necessary labour time becomes a particular battleground, driving commercial potential. For institutions that can resell their labour or commodities, they can build a rentier economy, although this is balanced against the

vast array of rents extracted from them by publishers, consultants and technology corporations. For institutions that can produce internationally-leading research, develop new services for new markets, or deliver accelerated degrees to new markets, time becomes the crucial factor. The ability to turnover existing capital more quickly than competitors is key and underscores the drive for efficiency, value-for-money and surplus, for instance by rationalising turnaround times for assessment marking and feedback.

Therefore, rationalisation is a means to generalise standardisation in activity to reduce risk. It catalyses an ecosystem of data and performance information (Williamson 2020a), which denies institutional and individual autonomy, and instead enables systemic certainty. Institutions are coerced into making use of data in decontextualised ways so that systemic judgements can be made. These data-rich appearances mediate the University worker's experience of social life, and they force the worker to internalise the quality of particular, quantifiable relations (boyd 2017; Hegel 2018). Moreover, they are reinforced by narratives of equality of opportunity and meritocracy, which themselves deny how algorithmic governance reinforces hegemonic exploitation and oppression, alongside intersectional injustices (Noble, 2018).

As the commodity and the identity of the University labourer are interrelated as a form of determinate historical subjectivity, the worker is increasingly regarded as an object to be conditioned by precarious employment, casualisation, disconnection and separation, as witnessed in the lives of Chile's taxi professors (Simbuerger and Neary 2016). Moreover, as academic labour and its processes are commodified, the individual is remade in a fragmented, inauthentic manner, and as such remains unable to adequately articulate their Self. This is exacerbated by the worker's tendency to over-identify with their role, rather than awaken to its

commodification. This maintains an estrangement between that worker and their labour process, peers and the natural world.

Self-consciousness and self-actualisation, as a movement that takes the Other into the Self, in order to transform subjectivity, is denied because over-identification focuses solely upon determinate forms of content, crystallised inside commodities (Pinel 2020). In the hopeless University, fetishised forms of self-consciousness are mediated by ‘the immediate object, the object of sensuous-certainty and perception’ (Hegel 2018: 103 S167). However, this object belongs to the institution, the funding body, the publisher or the State, or is framed by value-for-money, impact or satisfaction, and becomes a negative object that distorts the essence of the University labourer. Inside a system of commodity-exchange, there can be no personal transformation that does not internalise the symbolism of the commodity form, and affect how the worker imagines their identity and its content.

Just as this maintains an estrangement between subject areas, students and teachers, research and teaching professors, and so on, commodification is not an overcoming of the barriers to self-actualisation, rather it is their internalised reproduction. This then acts as a critical barrier to sublation, which is *both* the abolition of the commodity as the critical mediation in capitalist society *and* its transcendence. Abolition reveals the essence of activity, which can be preserved and transcended by the individual as she comes to mediate her own life directly (Hegel 2018). Here, Hegel (ibid.: III-12 S187, *emphasis* in original) argues the importance of self-authoring in terms of ‘*what is done through oneself*’. The objects of life, like research outputs or the student experience, are external-to-being yet they contain a kernel of knowing and doing in the world that can be carried forward as a movement of becoming.

This is a new essence, conditioned in a complex environment that demands particular modes of appearance. In generating a

new existence that might itself be sublated, the skills, knowledge and capabilities that enable impact or excellence, might be preserved and released for other ends. However, this requires University labourers to develop a political economic literacy able to situate their singular experiences against the totalising nature of the commodity form. Instead, the tendency is to focus upon processes of marketisation, the symptoms of distress, or an idea of the public good (Connell 2019; Holmwood 2011). This fails to connect University workers in general with the material reality of their work, and the ways in which it objectifies them.

Refusing this is a negative movement against University labour as a historically determinate form of work (Meyerhoff 2019; Neary 2020). In becoming for-themselves, such labourers need to negate their alienation from the labour process, the objects of labour, intellectual identity, and relationships to others and the world. This is especially so for those who have fetishised or become chained to the objects of their labour and their apparent privilege. They must critique the subjectivity given to the object and the objectification of themselves, through the power of performance data, the grading of a research output or impact case study, or student satisfaction scores, and instead look to abolish such a negative mediation of the Self (Hegel 2010: 9-10).

Critical here is building solidarity around the recognition that measurement against particular, performative and commodified norms is a fetishised impossibility, and that the racialised and patriarchal norms used to describe its symbolic power are toxic. As Hegel (*ibid.*: 140) argues, it is our unity-in-difference that shapes us. In a society mediated by the commodity, measurement of Self against Other determines us as deformed, governed by particular identities that are realised through exclusion. Yet, the universality of this process brings individuals into relation, with the possibility that we might glimpse how, beyond the commodity, we are

absolutely the same as each other in being different. In this unity, lies a distinction, which stresses how the direct determination of life through humane difference, rather than its mediation through the universal idea of the commodity, might enable a new sociality (Moten 2017).

The institutionalisation of intersectional hopelessness

Struggle *for* direct determination is also *against* colonial, patriarchal destitution for many of its workers. For Fanon (2001) a particular form of leadership enables such a culture, which exists inside structural tropes that emphasise the end of race and gender as analytical modes, with class long since departed. At *The End of History*, all University workers are created equal, and meritocracy and equality of opportunity place hegemonic human capital at the centre of what it means to learn, teach, research or administer.

The reality for those who define themselves as black or of colour, for those who identify as a woman, transgender, LGBTQIA, or who are disabled, is that they have to contend with cultures and structures that reproduce what Ignatin (1972) calls ‘wages of [patriarchal] whiteness’. The socio-political and psychological duality of this imaginary affects both those othered and those implicated in othering. Those who identify as white men may wish to show solidarity with those who are marginalised, but they risk consciously or subconsciously favouring an alliance with the forces of exploitation and expropriation that enable their own progression. Here, the symbolism of equality of opportunity enables:

- lower earnings potential for black and female students compared to their white, male peers, even considering educational achievement (Tompkins 2019);
- fewer black, female professors or leaders in HE (Rollock

2019);

- fewer black students attending selective colleges, in part due to a lack of role models (Gabriel and Tate 2017);
- the failure to publish and cite women and authors of colour in research, and to diminish their impact (Odic and Wojcik 2020);
- discrimination against women in the sciences (Aguinis et al. 2018);
- discrimination against certain forms of knowledge produced from intersectional groups or the South as 'invisible colleges' (Yusoff 2018);
- structures that militate against progression and performance for mothers and caregivers (Amsler and Motta 2017); and,
- the use of specific policy initiatives, like Prevent in the UK, to racially-profile specific groups on campus (Lowe 2017).

These are symptoms of engagement in 'the game of excellence', through which externally-defined forms of measurement rooted in quantity act as proxies for quality (Butler and Spoelstra 2020). Measurements are predicated upon the ability: to overwork; to place family, Self and caregiving as secondary; to access and leverage networks and resources; and to reflect back to those doing the measuring what they are looking for. Thus, for all University workers, 'metric assemblages' frame qualitative proxies that enable career progression, professional esteem and access to resources, like wages, through compliance that is naturalised in the maintenance or progression of a career (Burrows 2012).

These proxies are defined hegemonically and tend to reflect

racialised and patriarchal norms of behaviour, language, impact, excellence, entrepreneurship and performance. Those who do not outwardly mirror those norms must constantly validate and assert themselves in ways that demonstrate belonging (Collins 2017). This might include becoming an idealised role model, such as the black, woman professor or head of institutional service, to whose example other black women can aspire. This is a form of cultural and emotional taxation, in terms of the expectations on individuals whose identities are exploited and expropriated to enable particular, institutional performance metrics. For many this is an impossibility, and as such, survival demands sneaking in, stealing resources, abusing hospitality, and joining those with refugee status. These individuals are *in* the University but not *of* it. For Harney and Moten (ibid.: 6)

we cannot be satisfied with the recognition and acknowledgement generated by the very system that denies a) that anything was ever broken and b) that we deserved to be the broken part; so we refuse to ask for recognition and instead we want to take apart, dismantle, tear down the structure that, right now, limits our ability to find each other, to see beyond it and to access the places that we know lie outside its walls.

These educational realities have significant, knock-on, social impacts, such as access to housing, police harassment, access to resources in the event of unemployment, and worsened health conditions, including reports of suffering racial battle fatigue. Thus, on campus, one of the crucial issues is whether white men are able to engage in solidarity actions that materially support their structurally- and culturally-othered peers, for instance in affirmative action or seeking to address attainment gaps between

groups of students. Yet, there is a risk that those who identify with white, male staff and students push back against such agendas, where they are conditioned to believe that equality, rather than equality of opportunity, is a worsening of their own labour conditions. As Ignatin (1972) argues, these issues have to be confronted directly, and white privilege, wages of whiteness, white fragility and so on must become part of the struggle against capital, including inside the University. This deconsecrates meritocracy, which limits humanity to judgements taken from the particular perspective of the idealised, productive worker, ‘everything else being ignored’ (Marx 1875/1970).

In developing the political economic literacy of University labourers, it is important to note the personal and structural differences that frame how identities relate to each other, and the ways in which the capitalist mode of production limits, shackles, exploits or expropriates some identities more than others. Marx (ibid.) states that ‘right, instead of being equal, would have to be unequal’, in order to avoid these defects. Such a right is not that of the productive individual in a status-driven and structurally-reinforced education sector, because this only legitimates a specific fraction of the population.

Intersectional, intergenerational and intercommunal injustices cannot be treated as psychological and individuated, with solutions grounded in teaching tolerance, unconscious bias training, building colourblind institutions and so on. Through the ecosystem of HE, women, people of colour, those who are dis-abled and made marginal tend to be placed on teaching-only or insecure contracts, which limit future possibilities and lives (Emejulu 2017). Elsewhere colonial practices are maintained through the alleged epistemic neutrality of equality of opportunity in research, in spite of the outcry in the UK over the lack of funding for coronavirus research to projects with black

principal investigators (Adelaine et al. 2020). The idea of equality of opportunity and academic freedom merely reinforce existing structures as modes of exclusion and discrimination rooted in epistemic violence (Bhattacharyya 2018). These are the symptoms of an alienating political economy, and campus struggles must work against an ontology of inequality predicated upon inhuman experiences and toxic, material conditions of life.

This is one of the reasons why decoloniality and indigeneity, as struggles to delegitimise the immorality of white, male privilege and ways of knowing, doing and being in the world, matter. The historical and material effects of these dominant modes include: exploitative institutional practices and strategies; silencing of certain bodies, identities, cultures and knowledges; imposing claims about the universality of the epistemological and ontological certainties of the global North; and, accelerating environmental crises through a focus on development, growth, commercialisation and internationalisation. Movements of decoloniality and indigeneity force a reckoning with the University's uneasy relationship with uncertainty and vulnerability. This relationship reproduces imposed solutions to crisis of Nature, the environment, pandemics or finance, through risk-based hierarchies. At issue is whether a new symbolism of the University that is *neither* unitary, universal, and/or linear, *nor* Eurocentric in its assumptions, might enable new paths through crises. The alternative is the reproduction of hopeless struggles.

A hopeless struggle

Targeted resistances generate potential energy in the struggle for solidarity and co-operation, and for new paths toward autonomy. However, when faced by the incremental objectification of the University worker's everyday existence, the tendency is to push back against the most current, painful symptom, for instance in

terms of: cops on campus; a settler-colonial curriculum; precarious labour; resistance to border controls; debt; performance anxiety; sexual violence on campus.

A starting point for refusal is a scream against the latest indignity, or against indignities that are reproduced over-and-over. This has led to a range of struggles being documented, including: research about student protest, revolt and radical politics (Myers 2017); the development of radical pedagogic projects like student-as-producer (Neary 2020); the flowering of engagement with anti-oppressive and critical pedagogy (hooks 1994); interdisciplinary and cross-institutional, labour rights struggles (WIN 2020); and, the subversion of the institution (Harney and Moten 2013). However, the scream risks being for an idealised or symbolic University, rather than against its concrete, dystopian reality (Holloway 2003).

In large part, this is because the hopeless University is an anxiety machine that pushes us towards positions of personal, political stagnation, in the defence of the appearance of status, or in tactical responses to a range of structural inequalities. In this context, clinging to hope at *The End of History* is no plan. The systemic reproduction of indignities reinforces powerlessness, which itself breeds anger that is too easily turned inwards towards self-blame. This risks generating a depressive position, inside an institution that simply offers modes of triage for existence inside an inherently unstable and crisis-ridden system. Moreover, work inside the University is too fetishised and fragmented to generate counter-power, or to constitute an oppositional subjectivity through struggle.

It appears impossible for the University worker to reveal how their existence and being are mutilated and fragmented, like any other labourer, inside an assemblage designed for-value (Marx 1867/2004). Amongst managers and those with institutional

prestige, like professors, there is hope that we are still living in the end of history. In this mode, the future is collapsed into the present, and in deploying cognitive dissonance or dissociation, it is possible to maintain the idea that there is no alternative to the University-as-is.

There is potential for intersectional, intergenerational and intercommunal movement against the systematic imposition of precarious and scarce wage labour, status and privilege inside the University. Through movement one can be drawn to solidarity actions with those who have been carrying the weight of inequality. This requires a real rupture or revolution of consciousness (Althusser 1971), and a reflection upon the experiences of those who are: surplus labour; made precarious; outsourced; kettled on student demonstrations; made to suffer under gendered or racialised discrimination; or, living in communities who see no benefit from universities. The rupture refuses the assumption that we sit immediately prior to crisis and that if we work more intensively we might escape the collapse of our future hopes. Instead this rupture takes the logic of what is and describes a new path.

For Neary (2020) this requires practical, pedagogical and organisational action to undermine capitalism, whilst for Meyerhoff (2019) the colonial-settler University needs to be abolished. This erupts from an analysis of those conditions of work and life that are catalysing a lived reality of crisis, right now, and it offers the potential to map a new, political path. However, it is fraught with the possibility of fragmentation because mapping new paths is exhausting, and counter-pressures tend to be applied by those who suffer less. The concept of the map/mapping matters because we are trying to move away from a hopeless annihilation of ourselves, others and nature, by analysing, critiquing and theorising the variety of deep interconnections between lived

experiences and the world.

As I move through the next three chapters, I will situate my thinking against historical and dialectical materialism, in order to refuse the liberalism that seeks to rehabilitate the hopeless University-as-is at *The End of History*. Pointing towards intellectual work at the end of *The End of History*, requires a refocusing of the forms/structures, pathologies/cultures and methodologies/activities of the institution. It requires a richer understanding of the ways in which mediations like private property, commodity-exchange, the division of labour and the market, militate against humanity and a liveable world. It requires critique of the complicity of the University in reproducing systemic toxicity. Facing the intersection of environmental collapse, pandemic, austerity, and identity crises, there is a new urgency for a richer understanding of the University's political economy, and the possibilities for generating new modes of existence, actuality and being.

Forms of hopelessness

The University has the appearance of a seemingly immutable, transhistorical entity. Energy is expended defending, defining and re-energising: the public university; national universities (as if they operate as particularities in a terrain of equivalences); and, the good University. Commentators ask: what has happened to the University? How do we speak of universities? Why does academic freedom matter in the University? Political economists draw attention to the great University gamble, whilst sociologists consider structure and agency in the neoliberal university. Cultural theorists question the “Uberfication” of the University.

These defences and questions act as heuristics for exploring the idea of the University. There is a recognition of complexity in the forms of the University revealed in its structures, and the idea of this specific institution is used to open-up conversations about: public-private partnerships; the relationship between the public (good) and the private (bad); the ways in which governance, regulation and funding flow from the taxpayer into mediaeval spaces; the idea of value and value-for-money; and more. These heuristics are used to theorise, for instance, neoliberal governance,

the role of the market, human capital, academic commodities, and academic labour supply. The idea of the University acts as a container for all sorts of projections, expectations, lamentations, neuroses, and possibilities.

Others have discussed corporate forms and governance models, and how these morph historically in relation to policy and material practice (see, for instance, Marginson and Orodika 2011, McGettigan 2013, Münch 2014). These analyses have shown how corporate forms evolve through the relationship between private entities and public regulation and funding. They articulate how the particular corporate form of the institution and its governance have been shaped by: regulators that reflect the priorities of policy directed for the market and finance capital; vice-chancellors operating as chief executives; executive boards managing strategic and operational agendas through technocratic bureaucracies; and, governing bodies that increasingly marginalise democratic accountability to the workforce, students, and taxpayers.

Understanding the particular corporate form of the institution, inside an ecosystem that generalises value production and accumulation, reveals the limits of dominant narratives about the University's purpose. In the UK, a range of incremental policy changes have rolled-out an increasingly corporate form of University governance, including: the Jarratt report (1985), which established the Vice-Chancellor as Chief Executive; the 1988 decision to remove some universities from local government control; the Dearing report (1997), which restructured governing bodies; and, the Lambert report (2003), which recommended a voluntary code of governance for the HE sector (Shattock 2008).

As the UK Corporate Governance Code developed in parallel, there was an alignment with a normative, neoliberal focus upon new public management, and enabling the autonomy of the corporate form through 'best value' or 'value-for-money' (Davies

2016). This prioritised the position of the corporation in delivering public goods and social services like education. Moreover, in enabling corporations as legal entities to mediate power (Shattock 2008; Davies 2017), and recognising them as the primary body with agency and rights, this accelerated the corporate parasitisation of the State through ideology, policy and practices of privatisation, marketisation and financialisation. These generated pathologies of bureaucratic, technocratic, deterministic and entrepreneurial leadership, as *natural* responses to the social demands upon the University. These pathologies were amplified as the falling mass and rate of profit of the financial crisis enacted revenge capitalism (Haiven 2020) or punitive neoliberalism (Davies 2016).

In spite of the historical and material development of various legal forms of HE institutions, including charitable trusts, companies limited by guarantee, chartered corporations, and statutory corporations, these are institutions that are explicitly situated against value. This situation is mediated publicly by tropes of marketisation and financialisation, which tend to hide the systemic, political economic compulsion behind corporate shifts. For instance, the UK Government's Higher Education and Research Act (DfE 2017) centred market exit and entrance, with a keen eye upon the potential for new providers who may offer value-for-money and access to private investment. Reinforced during the pandemic by the HE Restructuring Regime (DfE 2020), this further ossifies institutional differences in financial, intellectual and social capital, generated historically and materially. As a result, this *both* enables the atomisation of the sector *and* amplifies competition.

For some institutions, one way out has been to enter bond markets, in order to raise resources for investment, in particular in infrastructure projects, which also require the maintenance of a credit rating at an investment-grade. In the United States

there have been buy-outs and takeovers of struggling colleges. This is a different set of forms from those elsewhere in the global North, where academics may be classed as civil servants, or where universities are independent charities. Thus, more economically liberal imaginaries of the University enable, for example: an increased role for outsourcing of services (for instance English language learning, estates, cleaning, security), in order to reduce costs; or, the use of tax exemptions on shared services to prepares the ground for outsourcing and the development of joint ventures.

The idea of joint ventures, or what Marx (1867/2004: 311) noted as ‘the associated capitalist’, is important in understanding McGettigan’s (2013: 135) concern that: ‘commercial operations and partnerships are already proliferating and creating a complex terrain in which democratic accountability is becoming more and more attenuated.’ The complexity of what actually delineates the form of the University makes it difficult to get a handle on governance, regulation, funding and operationalisation, let alone its relationship to the idea of *value*. Thus, its corporate forms and the ecosystems in which it exists further attenuate democratic accountability in two ways: first, through the ongoing recalibration of the University as a means of production; and second, because in the associational phase of capital, where development emerges on a global terrain, its value is shaped in relation to commercial capital and credit.

The search for value stresses the University, which is increasingly defined economically and denuded of actively-created political content beyond market-based responsibilities (Fraser 2013; Fraser and Jaeggi 2018). Where responses are limited to institutional analyses from the standpoint of labour, they tend to reproduce hopelessness through the fetishised symbolism of the University. The structural and systematic hierarchy of disciplines, emphasised through school and departmental forms, and periodically

reorganised or fractured, maps across to the imaginaries or mental structures of privileged gatekeepers, like professors. In this homology, forms enable ‘the consecration of the social order which the educational system performs behind its mask of neutrality’ (Bourdieu 1988: 204).

Beyond this, there is space for limited liberal reformism, in terms of interdisciplinarity, ideas of disruptive pedagogy, widening participation and so on. These have no leverage in terms of engagement with secular crises of capital or human annihilation of nature. Yet, they tend to reinforce particular conceptualisations that make invisible specific, unpalatable narratives and stories, even where they are destabilised by, for instance, movements through trauma like Black Lives Matter and Rhodes Must Fall. This is why some authors (Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Meyerhoff 2019) continue to stress the oppressive connections between state-based institutions, operating as a network of racial and colonial control, such as prisons and universities. There is an ongoing interrelationship between economic exploitation and racist othering, which intersects with capitalist development.

Crucially, indigenous and abolitionist scholars work to remove this mask, and argue that the University is a space formed through the acceptance and validation of specific bodies. This enables them to perform according to institutionalised control of narratives predicated upon the collection of numbers and identities for-value (Ahmed 2012; Meyerhoff 2019). Thus, Tuck and Yang’s (2012) seminal paper on indigeneity opens-up new terrain for the analysis of the symbolism and material form of the University. In particular, they identify the entanglements and dynamics of ‘settler colonialism’, which marks educational organisations and reproduces ‘unfair social structures’, by validating and evidencing certain positions, knowledges and ideologies. This points towards critiques *of* academic labour inside the capitalist University as

means of undermining the alienating forms of that institution (Postone 1993). It also questions whether certain forms, spaces or structures enable a symbiotic or parasitic relationship for certain individuals and groups, based upon their ability to tolerate the system, and be tolerant of it.

Marcuse (1969b), in responding to the role of universities in the 1968 uprisings in France, noted that forms impact who controls what questions might be asked about institutions. In conditions of crisis, courage and faith might be articulated by those refusing the corporate imaginaries of position, prestige, power and autonomy. For many academics, this process is too difficult to contend with and large amounts of cognitive dissonance are brought into play, in order to subsist, endure or thrive inside the University-as-is. Through institutional structures and a cognitive and emotional willingness to believe in intellectual status, their labour-power is integrated within capital to the point at which they are not simply exploited, but their souls are expropriated through competition for-value (Tronti 2019: 21).

Instead, it is those who have been proletarianised or othered who are able to ask meaningful questions about the boundaries, limits, potentialities and possibilities of the institution. They become potential carriers for a dialectical analysis of the University, and a counter-articulation of possibilities for forms of higher learning, with alternative, socially-useful, qualitative characteristics. Is it possible to raise the symbolism of the University to a new level of determination and a new universal conception, which might become the next, particular form to unfold and be transformed (*aufhebung*)? This process states that forms are determinate and finite, and not transhistorical. However, given the reproduction of flows of hopelessness inside institutional forms, this *appears* impossible.

Flows of hopelessness

The social character of production at *The End of History* normalises the existence of particular institutions, predicated upon alienated labour and the production of singular commodities able to contribute to flows of value. For Marx (1867/2004: 164, 165), the objects of production, predicated upon ‘the mysterious character of the commodity-form’, take on social form, where the definite social relation between humans assumes ‘the fantastic form of a relation between things’. Inside universities that generate prestige based upon cognition, this is ‘the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities... [and] arises from the peculiar social character of the labour which produces them’ (ibid.). The academic commodity, as research output, knowledge exchange, or innovation, and also as individual academic ego or brand, shapes institutional organisation of research and teaching, in relation to externally-imposed measures of value.

Historically, policy reifies and validates scientific disciplines as productive, alongside disciplines like Engineering that map directly to the industrial base of the economy. These tend to be increasingly technologically-enriched (including bio- and nano-technologies) and underpinned by financial incentives for specific teaching and research activities. As a result, disciplinary separations between the natural sciences and philosophy, alongside the marginalisation of the latter (alongside related humanities and arts subjects), are maintained in the face of empiricism and positivism (Marx 1844/1974; Mészáros 1972). In response, there has been an increase in policy that shapes the arts and humanities against the idea of the creative industries, and attempts to connect them to that same, productive base. This reduces the ability of University workers to see themselves as whole humans, as opposed to being immersed in specific administrative processes or disciplinary codes geared

around particular productive requirements. It also empties the critical, political content of their identities, precisely because their engagement with philosophy is subsumed for-value.

Fetishism also diminishes the role of teaching, which tends to be seen as training rather than for self-actualisation or self-determination. Generally unbundled from research, it can be fragmented into curriculum design, delivery and assessment, alongside the administration and assurance of these components. Where technology is overlain onto this unbundling, for instance through the use of lecture capture, attendance monitoring, or facial recognition, it amplifies a worsening of the conditions of teaching and learning labour. As Marx (1867/2004: 547) argued, machinery is ‘a more hideous form [for] exploiting labour-power’, reducing the worker into ‘a part of the specialised machine’, and *both* reducing wages *and* breeding ‘helpless dependence upon the factory as a whole’.

The ideological positioning of the curriculum is as commodity to be consumed at the lowest cost. Student satisfaction surveys, and teaching and research excellence surveys, coalesce as metric assemblages acting as technologies of control, which reinforce the imposition of technological rationalisation in the classroom. For Marx (1859), ‘the material productive forces of society [in] conflict with the existing relations of production’ catalyse systemic changes. This includes the cheapening of curriculum delivery or assessment by deploying an increasingly casualised and precarious surplus army of academic labourers, able to mobilise digital tools. Elsewhere, technologies reduce autonomy and increase the management of academic workloads and performance, because in a competitive environment established academic relations of production are fetters on production and efficiency (Watters 2021).

Increasingly, universities invest in infrastructure to generate increased rates of surplus, efficiency and value-for-money through

the development of human and intellectual capital. The focus is increasing the productivity of the stock of machines, equipment and physical/virtual estate, whilst *both* controlling and cheapening the majority of labour-power, *and* incubating commodity labour-power. This is where the form of the institution and its structures are immanent to transnational imperatives for productivity, accelerated by: first, the collapse in global rates of profit after the financial crash; and second, the lack of spaces for capitalists to invest the mass of financial surplus freed-up through quantitative easing (Carchedi and Roberts 2018).

In the factory, Marx (1867/2004: 502) noted that the application of technology, co-operation and organisational development, alongside the division of labour, ensured that there was a movement away from processes being adapted to labourers, towards the work being appropriated by an intensified labour process. This is true of the intensification of work inside the University, where the demand is for constant connection to the institution. This infects the worlds of those who work from home during the pandemic, and those who must use the virtual institution to labour ever-longer on evenings and weekends to meet impossible bureaucratic targets. Marx (ibid.: 531-32) saw this normalisation of overwork as an acceptable, moral and natural inversion of life, catalysed through machinery and technology, which ‘becomes the most unfailing means for turning the whole lifetime of a worker and [their] family into labour-time at capital’s disposal for its own valorisation.’ This is the transformation of ‘not only the technical basis of production but also the functions of the worker and the social combinations of the labour process’ (ibid.: 617).

Transformational social forms aim to minimize systemic and sectoral risk to financial performance, academic excellence and impact, the student experience, or teaching standards. For O’Malley (2008: 63) ‘the increasingly prevalent adoption of

risk as a framework of government creates new subjectivities and redefines relationships.’ At the level of the institutional sub-unit, the manager’s role is to control threats by steering operationalisation. Strategically, only high risk, red flags are to be addressed, and instead there is a reliance upon local autonomy in the performance management of risk against a predetermined, value-driven strategy for avoidance and mitigation (Beecher and Streitwieser 2019). Thus, there is an obsessive focus upon markers of normalised behaviour, like student attendance and personal tutoring data, or whether they are at risk of radicalisation or marginalisation (Sarra et al. 2019).

Here, governance structures attempt to manage risk in ways that are disciplinary and that reproduce a particular, symbolic view of the University as a bureaucracy for ordering reality. The imposition of student protection plans, and access and participation plans in the UK create a regulatory framework inside which academics have a limited narrative beyond that which is shaped on the terms of employability, excellence, impact and value-for-money. As a result, macro-economic control shapes institutional risk profiles, in relation to profitability, and discourses of productivity, technological innovation, market liberalisation, and entrepreneurial activity.

This mirrors Phillips and Rozworski’s (2019) analysis of economic planning inside market economies and corporations. Punitive hierarchies drive an obsession with particular kinds of management data, which undermine planning and effective use of resources through a degradation of contextual information. As information at the base of the academic economy is monitored and managed based on corporate, algorithmic norms, access to resources, including status, tenure and privilege can be allocated, and certain non-performative bodies labelled as at-risk. Here, the University structure acts as a container with a high level of

plasticity, able to re-purpose itself around the need to innovate constantly the forces and relations of production.

In the shifting forms of the institution, individuals have to maintain their utility as components in a machine that uses performance information to validate or reject performers. Validation and rejection are entangled inside of flows of hopelessness that generate ‘despotic superegos’ (Lazzarato 2014: 53), or survival strategies like fugitive planning or cognitive dissonance. For most University workers and students, labour is predicated upon realising increasingly specialised skills of infinitesimal quantity and quality before the ‘mass of labour that are embodied in the factory mechanism’ (Marx 1867/2004: 548). In order to maintain relevance, and to avoid redundancy, there is a desperate need to accrue skills. This further reinforces the dominion of human capital as private property, which exacerbates the hopelessness that stems from the internalisation of subjectivation (Lazzarato: 2014).

Hopelessness is manifested because the internalisation and possession of intellectual objects generates an essentialised subjectivity, which is immanent to the form of the University as it accelerates the commodification of intellectual work. The University worker’s fetishisation of their teaching, administration, technique, learning or research, is overlain with the ways in which they internalise the idea of the University. Yet this is also an object that can no longer be appropriated meaningfully, but that comes to dominate them as an oppressive power. Moreover, staff and students become neuro-workers, always connected to the institution, unable to disconnect from push-notifications even when on holiday, such that their nervous systems align with the metabolism of the University. This has been exacerbated during the pandemic, with changing workplace geographies (Reuschke 2019), and increased burdens on women and those with caring responsibilities (McLaren et al. 2020).

Ruuska (2018: 179) argues that this situates the University in a particular relation to nature and the environment, as its structures are calibrated around the generation of surpluses alongside their flows within and beyond the boundaries of the University. These flows amplify the Jevons Paradox, or the increasing efficiency of production leading to increasing cycles of consumption, and therefore increasing flows of despoliation. Given the obsession amongst institutions of the global North with internationalisation, University structures reproduce modes of knowing, doing and being that are more efficiently unsustainable. Reifying the form of the University reinforces the toxic reproduction of capital's social metabolism, because the form of the University enables capitalism's command structure, and denies the possibility for a radically different engagement with nature.

This highlights the failings embedded in the assemblages and flows of the University as a container 'for the interests which lead beyond the borders of its society', because 'its primary purpose is to realise and maintain the universal contained within the particularity of civil society' (Hegel 1942: 225 S249). The particular form of the University is immanent to value as its end and object, and the character of production inside its corporate forms tends to mirror the social need for productive labour and 'circles of association' (ibid.: 225-26 S251; 297 S303). As a result, the environment of the University shapes a technical, social machine, and it is impossible to describe the University without seeing it as a determinate, economic form of higher learning that emerges from the needs of an organic, totalising system.

Hence, its constant, systemic re-formism reinforces the dominant social metabolic order between humans and their environment, erupting in relation to the patriarchal and colonial competition and ego of the institution. This egoism widens flows of hopelessness, for instance in the white, patriarchal fragility that

rails against snowflake students, no platforming, grade inflation and the need for debt (Davies 2018). Flows of hopelessness centre the market as the sole arbiter of evidential practice and societal movement, especially where that market is dictated to by punitive ideological norms of blame, deficit and debt that underpin exploitation, expropriation and extraction. Such flows are exemplified through the concrete reality of hopelessness.

Restructuring the concrete reality of hopelessness

Experiencing the structures of the University is hopeless for many bodies that pass through or exist inside its physical and digital infrastructures. Capital's dynamism demands an unfolding quantification, for instance in the Australian Quality Indicators of Learning and Teaching dashboard, (Australian Government, Department of Education and Training (DET) 2020), institutional benchmarking and global rankings. Quantification enables subsumption and the restructuring of institutions that are compelled to expand into and expropriate resources from new markets, whilst driving efficiencies in established markets. This situates institutions and their structures against new forms of regulation, or the tightening of that regulation, which brings the concrete reality of study, service-provision, teaching and research inside the University into asymmetrical relation with national and transnational power focused upon job intensity and flexibility.

Quantification and its particular qualities, denoted as efficiency or value-for-money, unfolds: as technological solutions are applied to processes previously dependent on human labour; as departments are placed under target-driven, financial stress; or, as financial restrictions and projections are used to justify redundancies or course closures. Tierney (1998) wrote about the responsive University and the need to generate high performance through restructuring. Gumport (2000) similarly focused upon

the need to restructure as the only response to financial stress. Mok (2005) analysed University mergers and changing governance in China, whilst Lee and Gopinathan (2008) did so in Singapore, with a focus upon globalisation and global competition. For Levin and Greenwood (2008), the experience of universities in Norway and the USA is that the institutional monopoly on knowledge production is in decline, and that restructuring needs to be focused upon modes of useful action research from inside the institution.

In discussing University restructuring in the USA, Temmerman (2019) uses the term *healing* about how academics and administrative staff feel following restructuring processes. She notes that staff ask ‘1) What was wrong with the old structure?’; and 2) “How are we going to be better off under the new structure?” These are questions full of pain, which resonate with discussions of survivor guilt spoken about following restructures at Flinders University in Australia that had a legacy over several years (see #flindersrestructure). Temmerbaum (2019) goes on to discuss how ‘[a]s an external independent facilitator with no ties to the institution, my job was to help kick-start a change process that the executive dean and senior management group could then effect.’

The use of external consultants in an apparently neutral manner to shape change, denies the need of individuals to process the pain imposed through restructures. Instead, as the new form takes shape, driven by senior management, individuals are expected to move on, without those ejected or removed. There is an assumption that particular forms of strong leadership are required to cope with ‘divergent points of view’ unable to see ‘common ground’. In particular, Temmerman (ibid.) argues this is required because some staff will ‘never commit to any change regardless of what it is’. In order to deploy a new structure or form to implement new intellectual content, her advice is telling: ‘to offer

voluntary retirement packages to some and to start to reshape the staffing profile of the faculty and employ staff who, from the very beginning, contribute positively to the new structure.'

As the law of value comes to dominate University life, the socially-useful content of intellectual work is re-formed through cycles of restructuring and the recycling of the individuals who impose strategic management. As the form of the institution changes to become more appropriate to its content, it is deterritorialised and reterritorialised. This is not simply through new service-delivery units or merged faculties or schools, but also through the imposition of new public management tools for risk management. It is also seen in new policy formations designed to maintain and enhance reputational forms, for instance, in relation to absence management, performance management, IT and social media use, and conduct and dignity at work. Networks of infrastructure and policy are immanent to relationships of power, and anchor the corporate autonomy of the institution. Kauppinen and Kaidesoja (2014) argue that in Finland this has underpinned a loss of democratic content in the institution, and that it is replaced with infrastructures designed around efficiency. Ruuska (2018) echoes this in extending the idea that the University is simply a means of production for the expansion of capital, in response to State-based regulation. Thus, modes of regulation and funding impact forms of institutional governance, which impose restructuring regimes as authoritarian responses to shifting, global relations of production.

Restructuring also tends to reproduce modes of power that accelerate external relations of production, for instance military-funded academic knowledge transfer, or the relationship between academics and commercial partners engaged in surveillance (Dyer-Witheford 2015, Hoofd 2017, Murphy 2020). Increasingly, institutional forms take a punitive or authoritarian turn, through which both curriculum and research practices are overlain with

institutionalised technologies that monitor and allow judgements to be made. This includes those for facial recognition and app-enabled attendance monitoring via Wi-Fi tethering (Andrejevic and Selwyn 2020), which are marketed in terms of campus security, alongside progression and retention, but which damage or restrict free expression, privacy and autonomy.

Whilst the utility of such technologies is framed around tracking the individual in response to their actions and location, judgements are imposed about legitimacy, behaviour and identity. Where behaviours and identities do not match dominant norms, they cannot align with the forms of the University that those norms articulate. Here, injustice is amplified in the deployment of the digital ecosystem, through the ways in which algorithms address people of colour and women, alongside non-binary and trans people. The judgements afforded by colonial and patriarchal, ‘interpretative horizons’ (Alcoff 2006), reinforce the internalisation of their characteristics (Stark 2019). In the collection of sensitive biometric data that is intrusive and tends to lack consent, the institution is reproduced by sequestering and repurposing information about individuals, contacts, behaviour, feelings and practices (Pasquale 2016).

As a result, a terrain of necropolitics makes invisible certain bodies, or makes their existence a form of living death (Mbembe 2019). The process of making invisible is entangled with institutional formations that serve to benchmark individuals, subjects and institutions, pivoting around human capital formation (World Bank 2020), and commodification. For those regarded as of less-value or menial, there is a separate layer of institutional existence, described as: an undercommons, which acts as an asylum, or home for the dispossessed and for lost souls (Harney and Moten 2013); or, a workhouse for those forced to suffer technologised and routinised service jobs (NTEU 2018). It is crucial to recognise

the intersection of insecurity, low-wage, and racial and gendered segmentation in the structures of institutions (The UK Equality and Human Rights Commission (UKEHRC) 2019).

Where individuals attempt to stand-up to forms of inequality, or even exploitation and violence, there is a tendency to regard them as a *wilful subject* (Ahmed 2014), or for shaming strategies and gas-lighting to be deployed institutionally through policy. As Bernard (2017) notes, this tends to create identities with marginal positionality in the Academy. Instead, the forms of the hopeless university tend to deny any political horizon because: work processes separate out individual forms and spaces of labour; institutional committee structures maintain types and separations of work, divorced from labour relations; and the structure and layout of buildings maintain separations between academics, students and professional services staff. The University describes a lifeworld of estrangement, where staff who benefit from institutional rents, like consultants, have nothing to gain from solidarity actions with tenured staff. The imperative is to reproduce infrastructures and forms of the institution (in terms of technology, policy, organisation and flows of information) that estrange individuals. This is amplified by the very fact that the University exists in an ecosystem or association of capitals, and never acts alone.

Hopeless associations and joint ventures

For Marx (1867/2004: 311), the expansion of capital accumulation tends to occur either at the hands of ‘massive capitals’ as monopolies, or through the development of joint-stock companies, identified as ‘the associated capitalist’. Through association, corporate networks or ecosystems are able to leverage value across the whole of the educational experience, for instance, in: infrastructure for student accommodation; the provision of digital infrastructure for

teaching and research; the provision of services to manage student progression; the procurement of integrated management systems for professional services activities; and, corporate commissioning of programs of study. During crises, the threat of infrastructure or constant capital falling idle, the threats to market position and profitability, and bankruptcies, tend to catalyse such associations in response to the question: how can capitalists sell their products when the mass of the population is impoverished?

This is also accompanied by the development of credit and financial or merchant capital. However, it is important to note that the development of the associated capitalist, alongside the role of credit and debt, enables systemic uncertainty, such as in the supply of raw materials and infrastructure, access to new markets, and the development of human capital, to be reduced. This occurs across the lifeworld of the institution, in terms of the staff and student experience, and public engagement, and thereby ensures that the productive capacity of the University does not remain latent, rather is activated (*ibid.*: 219). It also stitches that lifeworld into a broader social terrain, defined by the universe of value. Thus, during the pandemic, at a time in which such productive capacity could have remained idle, venture capital sought to accelerate its role in educational technology, in particular through exchange traded funds (Williamson, 2020b). Williamson (*ibid.*) highlights how such funds identify and invest in ‘megatrends’, such as cybersecurity and data privacy, medical and life sciences, and education technology and digital learning.

This demonstrates the ways in which finance capital continually seeks to enable the colonisation of new markets, in part through new combinations of capitals, skills, knowledges and capabilities, which has been an accelerating trend since the financial crash in 2007/08 (Hall 2015; Szadkowski 2019). Changes in the forces of production in one sector are transferred into other sectors, through

the solvent power of money (Marx 1867/2004). This enables, for instance, military funding to infect the University, or artificial intelligence or bio-technology to be incubated inside educational institutions, through a range of corporate partnerships, knowledge exchange and transfer, and commercialisation. These processes further insinuate business analysis, asset management, venture capital, and private equity inside the movement of the forces of production, and as a result, this reproduces expanding circuits of alienation for University workers, who are further removed from any public good, beyond the moral imperative for growth.

At *The End of History*, the disciplinary, anti-emancipatory use of technology is amplified because finance capital is able to leverage a deeply integrated ecosystem of personal and corporate relationships, described as transnational activist networks, working for the reproduction of power and value (Ball 2012). In the University, associations of vice chancellors and executive boards work in partnership with: policy makers, and the policy wonks and consultants who help to direct policy implementation; finance capital, in terms of private equity firms, credit rating agencies, lenders in bond markets; service providers, like technology firms (often underpinned by venture capital) and educational publishers; external validating agencies and institutions commissioning curricula, like public sector regulatory bodies and industry/commercial partners; those mitigating systemic risk, including police and security forces; philanthrocapitalists, like the Gates' Foundation; and, individuals regarded as consumers, like fee-paying students and their families/carers, alongside knowledge transfer partners. Working collaboratively, these form a deterritorialised network backed up by disciplinary, State power, aimed at defining social policy as public provision for private competitiveness through imposed flexibility (Streek 2016).

Marx (1867/2004: 568) was clear that joint-stock structures

were underpinned by the separation of ownership and control of capital, and that ‘social capital is applied by those who are not its owners, and who therefore proceed quite unlike owners’, in order to extract value, in the form of services, profits, rents or money-payment for loans. Finance capital and transnational systems of banking may not sit on institutional executive boards, but in mediating flows of value and money, they act as arbiters in the structures of accumulation. This then tends to underpin the generation of monopolies, forms of centralisation in planning and delivery, and mergers, acquisitions, outsourcing, shared services and restructuring. In this way, associations of capitals acting as joint ventures leverage capitalist accumulation from a terrain of HE.

Predicated upon the primacy of the commodity, this is reproduced by ‘intellectuals [who] tend to emphasize the primacy of developing a sociopolitical order and stability capable of protecting private property at the expense of other freedoms’ (Chuǎng 2019b). Thus, academic producers are compelled to reproduce structures for the expropriation of surplus value, grounded in the surplus labour and performance data of staff and students. This is a primary source of profit through rents for services or commercialisation, leveraged through merchant capital or the use of finance capital and credit, to increase the rate of turnover of specific educational commodities and services-as-commodities (Marx 1885/1992). It is witnessed in terms of: accelerated curricula and short courses; the use of paywalled content, like journal articles; subscriptions that enable virtual learning through the on-line production and circulation of curriculum resources, including through gold open access; the use of predictive algorithmic ecosystems; the management and sale of student loan books; engagement in bond markets; corporate engagement both in the commercialisation and knowledge exchange; and, the outsourcing of physical and

technological infrastructures.

For Marx (1857/1993: 539), the purpose of such associations is to remove spatial barriers to exchange across the globe, and 'to annihilate this space with time'. The point is to reduce to a minimum the time academic commodities spend in motion rather than in exchange or consumption. He also identified how, through associations, capitalists attempt to use innovations in spatial organisation, transport and communications, to reduce circulation time and to increase the geography of capital accumulation (Marx 1867/2004). The hegemony of the capitalist mode of production rests on the expansion of a global system of valorisation, which in turn demands that commodities are not simply used but exchanged, and that an associated infrastructure enables such practices where monopolies do not exist.

The design of these associations differs depending upon the intellectual, economic and social capital of specific institutions, which have accrued differentially based on their material history. Thus, the availability of league table data, produced and circulated globally, directs the availability of particular networks to particular forms of performance in the educational market, as witnessed in credit rating reports on specific institutions and sectors (Moody's 2020). New forms of monopoly governance, predicated upon planning through flows of data are enabled, although such flows need outlets. Marx and Engels (1848/2002) describe how market-based colonisation, stimulated by the need to create and enable capital accumulation and spaces for further valorisation, drives transnational and cosmopolitan consumption. This is one reason why such associated capitalist ventures, underpinned by transnational agreements like the Belt and Road Initiative, The Busan partnership for Effective Development and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, are so dangerous for local cultures. Knowledge that is defined by productivity, intensity and the commodity, has

a moral imperative to destroy indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being. This imperative is its movement of Right.

In describing the universal reality of such joint ventures, or associations of capital, it is useful to reflect upon Holloway's (2003: 6) argument about the limitations of agency and autonomy for the nation State, and to situate the University in that analysis.

In reality, what the [University] does is limited and shaped by the fact that it exists as just one node in a web of social relations. Crucially, this web of social relations centres on the way in which work is organised. The fact that work is organised on a capitalist basis means that what the [University] does and can do is limited and shaped by the need to maintain the system of capitalist organisation of which it is a part.

For Holloway, any intention to transform the State or the institutions it regulates will mean manoeuvring for power, and will tend to be co-opted by those with a monopoly on disciplinary power. This is why technologically-infused, finance capital dominates, as it works to dissolve established structures and forms, and recompose them such that surplus can be extracted and accumulated over a transnational terrain (Marx 1867/2004, 1894/1991). Thus, financialised, monopoly capitalism enacts new associations of capitals, or joint ventures, with an assault on labour rights, the privatisation of social goods, strategies for globalisation and the development of new technologies.

These associations hide behind the morality of merit and meritocracy, alongside equality of opportunity, predicated upon an individual's hard work and investment in the development of their human capital. In the face of this hegemonic, associational power, it becomes difficult to imagine a different form of social life beyond the realities of capitalist work. Thus, even in discussions of

opening access to University research and scholarship, for instance in the University of California disengaging from journals hosted by international publisher Elsevier (Gaiend 2019), the key driver is the cost base for the institution and its ability to innovate around open-access scholarship (Bacevic and Muellerleile 2018).

Conditioned by the network power of its transnational associations, the educational focus of *the hopeless University* is the generation of individual, user-generated outcomes that reproduce a set of universal, transhistorical norms. Against this, it is unacceptable to argue for other forms of value or organisation. This reinforces the structural dominance of educational elites within transnational capitalism, and their limited, procedural definition of the purpose of education and educational innovation. Such innovation flowing to/from the University supports the ways in which capitalism intentionally designs, promotes and manages forms of democracy and governance that complement its material objectives.

In contesting these, University workers appear to be faced by their own local institution, yet this is engaged in particular global networks, and stitched into an associational network of employers with power-over working conditions, designed to meet policy requirements for productivity and growth. The logics of profit and power reinforce University restructuring regimes, designed not simply for control but to raise ‘the social productivity of labour... at the cost of the individual worker’ (Marx 1867/2004: 799). For instance, in the UK, negotiations by trade unions take place locally, but also nationally with the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA 2021), which works to ‘support HE institutions by representing their interests as employers and facilitating their work in delivering effective employment and workforce strategies.’

Associational networks do not centre human values for direct

human production in the world, let alone a social engagement with nature that is non-toxic. Instead, they enforce ‘a dialectical inversion so that they become means of domination and exploitation of the producers’, and as such University workers become fragmented, forced to engage with technologies that ‘destroy the actual content of [their] labour by turning it into a torment’, deforming the conditions of labour (Marx 1867/2004: 799). Whilst the University worker knows how their work might offer socially-useful knowledge away from the market, labour has limited power on a sector-by-sector basis. The inability to reimagine higher learning beyond the recuperation of the public university, leaves University workers in powerless, asymmetrical relation to monopoly finance capital and the power it wields through its associations.

Financialised abjection

Covid-19 has amplified the ways in which the long depression normalises restructuring regimes in the desperate search for valorisation and growth (Carchedi and Roberts 2018). Cerra and Saxena (2018) highlight hysteresis, or the permanent scarring caused by negative events, which, in the case of the duality of financial and epidemiological crises, is realised as an inability to re-establish stable systems of social reproduction through capital accumulation. Whilst analyses of hysteresis question the validity of business-as-usual for universities, sector leaders have linked government-backed support to their commitment to ‘reduce costs, increase efficiency and moderate certain behaviours to increase stability and sustainability’ (UUK 2020a). Institutions able to draw down on reserves of financial capital, or with relatively liquid assets, are able to manage in the short- to medium-term, unlike those with: high debt or other fixed costs that need to be serviced or fall due; strict debt or bond covenants; high exposure to certain

income streams, like international student fees; and, weak cash at the bank or low levels of liquidity. Those with higher social and intellectual or cultural capital also tend to be able to borrow at lower rates.

This matters for over-leveraged institutions, in particular those that have taken on additional debt burdens to maintain or generate competitive edge, because they do not have reserves to drawdown upon or have covenants placed upon the use of those reserves. Between 2015-19 UK HE institutions expanded total external borrowing by 48 per cent, to £14bn (Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) 2019). Such debt is used to generate absolute surplus value, and also to compete nationally and globally through restructuring that enables the generation of relative surplus value. However, this surplus is released into associated capitals, beyond the simple University. For instance, in order to avoid *events of default*, bond covenants place significant restrictions on institutional governance, and prioritise specific, annual levels of business performance, often in relation to: the generation of surpluses; the maintenance of regulatory conditions; the maintenance of debt service ratios (the relationship between cash from operations and the annual cost of servicing borrowing in terms of interest and repayments); and, the regulation of net borrowing (limited to a specific multiplier of earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation).

Financial realities force institutional leaders to implement real cuts because they are required to drive down the costs of variable capital, in order to compete. This is a state of constant revolutionising, in the search for surpluses, and it is accelerated during crises, such that existing relations of production are cast off. Here, those individuals, subjects and institutions that are measured as unproductive are stigmatised and excluded, to the point where they are regarded as systemically abject. Of course,

the amplification of this process demonstrates the abject state of HE sectors that are governed and regulated for finance capital to the detriment of the lived experiences of those who labour in them. This is an anxiety-inducing process that induces individuals to objectify themselves *both* as abject *and* never good enough. This is a miserable and wretched process of intellectual being, conditioned by financialisation and the demands for commodification.

The system that catalyses such objectification and alienation is itself abject, if only intellectual workers were able to view it as such. However, financialised abjection impacts institutions that need to control systemic risk, where constant competition and the threat of being cast off or cut off from surpluses acts to govern activities, cultures and structures. It is particularly the case for those who may require further financial support, in order to survive. This demands institutional efficiency plans and financial imperatives to maintain economic health for the benefit of certain creditors (Connolly 2020). As a result, conditions of labour worsen, witnessed in reductions to research allocations and increases in teaching (Kornbluh, 2020), or the acceleration and intensification of professional services' functions. The need is to turnover money-capital and accumulate additional surpluses more quickly, and thereby release more value that can be capitalised (Marx 1894/1991). As a result, there is a flow of hopelessness between the individual and the institutional associations within which they labour, conditioned by monopoly finance.

In the assault on variable capital and the need to increase the organic composition of capital, power increasingly lies with lenders who transfer moral hazard to educational providers and their workers (Connolly 2020). In finding alternative paths, it is crucial to re-think how merchant, credit and finance capital affect the inner workings of the sector, in particular as universities are reconstructed inside the equivalent of joint-stock companies.

Marx's (1867/2004) functions of money were threefold: as a measure of value (in terms of price based on exchange of goods and services); as a medium of circulation (enabling commodities to circulate); and as money proper (as a hoard, a means of payment and as world money). Money brings the University into relation to ideas of price, value, purchasing power, and services, and acts as a way of bringing the socially-useful labour of the institution into the market, in order that the value of courses, research, impact, knowledge transfer and so on from different institutions can be commodified, compared and exchanged. Through student and institutional debt, the expansion of internationalisation and commercialisation, engagement with philanthrocapitalists, and so on, money has a solvent effect on institutional forms.

The ready availability of credit and the desire to widen the social circulation of commodity money reinforces marketised narratives of excellence, efficiency, employability and value-for-money. Yet, as objective measures of value are more difficult to make, money tends to stand in as a proxy for value in the institution, where it links efficiency to socially-necessary labour, or labour for which the market will pay a price. This is why there is such a focus upon the methodological validity of league tables and the reliability of their annual outcomes. Yet, it is still difficult to use money as a measure of value to compare the exchange value of particular courses at different institutions that have different material histories, forms of intellectual and social capital, infrastructure and so on. Instead, there is an increasing emphasis upon value-for-money, and the weak value of certain, allegedly 'low quality' degrees where graduate outcomes crystallise around earnings' potential. This is important in tying *individual debt* taken on as a measure of value to meet the price of a degree, to *the creation of human capital* that can circulate and generate new money.

By linking value and circulation, credit is also crucial for

institutions in creating an infrastructure predicated upon future human capital and productive capacity. However, the likelihood of future monetary crises compels individual and institutions to hold commodity money as a hoard or surplus, in order to invest-to-compete. The lack of a hoard or the need to take money out of circulation, such that it can be used as money proper for payment, has driven some institutions to the edge or towards refinancing. Whilst the University of California's ongoing engagement with refinancing in the bond markets is one example, the restructuring enforced through a £120 million loan at the University of Reading in the UK is another. Elsewhere in the UK in 2019, Cardiff University proposed 380 job cuts following a £20 million deficit, and Swansea University had academic suspensions, including the Vice-Chancellor and a criminal investigation. During the pandemic, in 2021, a dozen UK institutions threatened redundancies.

For those who labour inside universities, money has come to dominate the educational landscape in ways that are completely divorced from the classroom, the laboratory, or the community inside which knowledge exchange is taking place. Money enables: bottlenecks to be overcome (through the employment of precarious labour); a quicker turnover of production (through accelerated degrees or rapid prototyping); intensified labour processes (through capital-intensive use of classroom technologies); increased academic entropy (through internationalisation strategies predicated upon commodity-dumping); and the ability to create new forms of organisational development. It ensures that the machinery of capitalism can maximise the productive capacity and capability of the elementary parts from which it is composed. As Foucault (1975: 16) argues: 'Discipline is no longer simply an art of distributing bodies, of extracting time from them and accumulating it, but of composing forces in order to obtain an efficient machine.'

In this machine, credit and money capital reinforce hegemonic practices and intersectional injustices through differential access to resources based upon generalised key performance targets and indicators. Amongst atomised University workers fulfilling a range of roles, solidarity and co-operation are negated, and ultra-exploitation is normalised through ‘a geometry of divisible segments’ (ibid.: 163). University labour is conditioned as a new vector of managerial control, which operates through the anti-politics of financialised economic freedom that ties humans ‘libidinally and aggressively to the commodity form’ (Marcuse, 1969b). One outcome is the subservience of socially-useful knowing to knowledge that has exchange-value, and which in circulation can generate more money.

Money also dissolves the boundaries between the University and its environment. Through finance capital, internationalisation and capital-intensive commercialisation, relative surplus value is generated and more energy is consumed. Even where educational commodities are produced more efficiently, their use and impact are broadened, such that the Jevons Paradox takes hold. The drive for financial efficiency ensures that institutions can only contribute to education for unsustainable development. For Moore (2015), this contributes to the assault by the law of value on the web of life, as the University’s strategic plans, key performance indicators, impact agendas, entrepreneurial activity and spin-outs, become ways of organising nature to generate surplus.

Here, it is important to recognise that the capitalist University is as hopeless as other capitalist organisations, in that its search for operating surpluses forces it to treat nature as a free gift enabling further accumulation, and as a space inside which waste can be dumped. For instance, nods to sustainable development do not offset the emissions for institutions from internationalisation activities, international student mobility, the carbon embedded

in infrastructure, the use of energy-intensive technologies and activities, the failure to divest investment portfolios from fossil fuels, or the impact of purchasing decisions (People and Planet 2021; Shields 2019).

Thus, the University compels engagement in financialised forms of abjection, in an attempt to smooth out disruptions to circulation and the accumulation of capital, and the uneven development of capitalist modes of production. This accelerates capital's desire to overcome its barriers, including those of space. As a result, the colonial-settler reality of the institution is extended, including through research strategies predicated upon access to cheap energy, rare earth metals, and spaces for fieldwork, experimentation and data gathering in the global South (Omeje 2017; Stein and Andreotti 2016). Through associations, finance and commercial capital attempt to synchronise academic production with their own circuits, and in this the University is re-formed to become a highly-sophisticated wealth defence industry and an engine of a particular form of financialised progress. Through its financialised abjection, the University dissolves its historical and material scholarly communities, tied to particular forms of social engagement and justice, and instead structures a new community predicated upon metabolic unfreedom (Marx 1857/1993; 1867/2004).

Metabolic unfreedom

For Debord (2009: 54), our mode of constructing the world is what separates us from it and from each other: 'What creates the abstract power of society creates its concrete *unfreedom*.' Flowing from alienated labour inside the University, staff and students have their engagement with knowing the world and doing things in socially-useful ways curtailed. Their being is mediated by private property, commodity-exchange, the division of labour and the

market, so that their very appearance is defined as (un)productive. At *The End of History*, the hopeless University assembles this as a layer of unfreedom and objectification, in its contribution to capital's unfolding mode of social metabolic control.

The University enriches the particular metabolic relationship between capital and the planet, through relations and forces of production that strengthen the subsumption of life under value production. The idea of social metabolic control illuminates the complex, interdependent mechanisms behind capital's material and historical exploitation and expropriation of humans and nature (Foster 2017). The focus upon metabolism draws attention to how capital exploits and extracts, in order to sustain the flows of energy it needs in order to reproduce *both* itself *and* its autonomy over the society off which it feeds. These flows of energy enable use values to be exchanged and commodities to be circulated and consumed, enabling valorisation and a particular form of sociability. In searching for value, capital desires and demands human colonisation of the planet, such that hegemonic fractions of the global population refuse the agency *both* of those they expropriate and exploit *and* of nature, which is a site for extraction.

The hopeless University is a key actor in this reproduction of capital's social metabolic control, and in maintaining the delusions of *The End of History*. Unable to imagine life beyond the universe of value, the University reproduces itself in relation to neutral, socio-technological fixes to crises, which maintain the circuits of production, circulation and accumulation (Dyer-Witheford 2015). In maintaining its idealisation of value, the structures of the institution maintain their connection to violent, colonial-settler, anti-indigenous modes of knowledge production, rather than of integration, acceptance and knowing the world (Stein and Andreotti 2016). Hence it contributes to the symbolism of cybernetic, environmental control, rather than renewal (Tiqqun

2001).

Such control is accountable only to the associations through which value production is governed and regulated, in relation to competition and relative surplus value, and using the financial system as the planning mechanism. As a result, University strategies further the coloniality of capital, whilst they also incubate infrastructure, innovation and investment for new commodity capital (Phillips and Rozworski 2019). The University helps to maintain the legitimacy of capital's social metabolic control and its limited realm of freedom for people, as the movement of 'a system of legalised right [that] must contain the application of the universal conception to objects and cases whose qualities are given externally' (Hegel 1942: 15 S3). The particular form of the University energises a universal conception of the world at *The End of History*, rationalised as the constant compulsion to be productive. The University is reproduced against this rationality, precisely because 'individuals can attain their ends only in so far as they themselves determine their knowing, willing, and acting in a universal way and make themselves links in this chain of social connections' (ibid.: 183 S187).

The University cannot escape value's gravitational pull. As a result, it must impose a particular form of productive freedom and morality as a 'universality of knowing and willing', through which an individual's 'particularity is educated up to subjectivity' (ibid.). Subjectivity is framed through the hegemony of norms and values predicated upon the performance of particular bodies. Crucially, this also ties the University into capital's social metabolic control of the planet, as a mode of maintaining its autonomy against human *species-being* (Mészáros 2005). In this, its forms articulate a movement of value and fetishism (Holloway 1995).

Venturing beyond hopelessness

This chapter has pivoted around forms and structures of universities that are disabling in the context of global crises, precisely because they do not allow for direct democracy inside the institution and across its networks. Instead, the hopeless University simply reinforces joint ventures or associations of capitals predicated upon the law of value and expanding circuits of surplus production. In response, we might argue for worker self-management, but what would we manage, inside capitalist social relations? Are we pushing for council communism through a co-operative University, as a transitional demand inside a dictatorship of the proletariat? Can a co-operative University prefigure new forms beyond the management of value, as a movement of humane values? How does the University relate to the ideals of the First International, rather than lapsing into social democratic ideation? Can the University be related to the transitional stages, in particular of the lower form of communism, outlined by Marx (1875/1970) in his critique of the Gotha Program?

At present, the form of the institution, mirroring the demands of the capitalist state, frames ongoing exploitation that seeks to erase historical modes of social intercourse. This includes those in indigenous communities and communes, and those studied by Marx towards the end of his life in the *Ethnographic Manuscripts* (Kradner 1974). For Lenin (1981), there is a central desire to move away from institutions through the struggle for communism as direct, rather than mediated, social interaction and association, which requires no specific structures, merely human agency. Marx (1875/1970, 1894/1991) is clear that through collective production, money capital can be abolished, as society distributes labour-power and means of production through democratic planning, whilst considering forms of tokens that cannot circulate, but which enable individuals to access social consumption funds. This must include the abundance of available higher learning.

Crucial here, is moving towards spaces that are not framed by liberal laws, which centre private property and inequality. These apply dominant forms of measuring to different people who are not alike and not equal, and through claims to equality of opportunity and merit. This process entrenches privilege, status, the division of mental and physical labour, as sources of social inequality, and furthers our metabolic rift with nature. In response, Marx (1894/1991) was clear that developing and releasing human productive capacity beyond institutions framed by the law of value would reduce the realm of necessity (or necessary work) and widen that of freedom (or autonomy). As a consequence, this will cause those institutions to begin to wither away.

This depends upon a move from formal equality to real equality as a process. However, the University has become a hopeless space because it is wedded to the reproduction of a social structure in which *both* it *and* its privileged actors are rewarded. These are not structures for real equality, or a movement ‘from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs’ (Marx 1875/1970). Moreover, the University defines its (re)structures as practical stages or blueprints towards meritocracy and mobility. Against this liberal fallacy, forms that enable the majority of people to own how they know themselves, their communities, their work and their lives, are crucial. Here, liberating what has been socially-produced and is socially-useful from inside the structures of the University, and accounting for them collectively, offers a transitional way forward.

The release of time is a radical, or even revolutionary, transitional demand. Institutional forms are structured around hours of labour, and whilst these have limited impact on the generation of relative surplus value, they distort the labourer’s social reproduction by extending the working day. Professional services’ staff and academics must argue for a reduction in working hours, in order to

widen the realm of freedom or autonomy away from the workplace. Such a reduction in working hours would also enable more people to share the necessary work of the institution, including the surplus population of intellectual workers like graduate teaching assistants currently precariously employed. Using the struggle to reduce labour-time as a demand connected to an end to precarious livelihoods and inequality in existing institutional forms is a transitional move away from capitalist social relations. Such an opening-out of the space-time of the University would make visible those previously excluded, and enable a discussion of the spaces that would enable new ethical epistemologies and ontologies.

Yet there is ongoing resistance to the idea that anything other than a renewed institution is necessary. For instance, the UPP Foundation's *Truly Civic Report* (2019) argues that a sense of mission can be rejuvenated by Land Grant Universities becoming place-based transformational institutions, as a widening-out of public engagement. These are attempts to make compromises with a toxic and brutalising system of social reproduction. The search for a better capitalist University cannot escape the gravitational pull of value, and offers limited critique of the cultures reproduced inside universities. These shape the logics of dispossession and dehumanisation implicit in processes of institutional anti-blackness and ongoing settler-colonialism (Meyerhoff 2019; Tuck and Yang 2012). A new University is only required if it can point beyond its alienating forms and their dehumanising pathologies.

Pathological hopelessness

The structures of institutions contain and enable the production, circulation and accumulation of power. At *The End of History*, the idea of the institution is entangled with a defence of power and a potential movement of reclaiming. Yet its very structures enable, and depend upon, cultures that move resources, privilege and surpluses. In the defence and reproduction of such cultures, people get hurt. This is the morbidity and pathological intent of the University. It is the compulsive, habitual search for surplus data, knowledge, skills, capabilities, money, value, labour. Its sickness is its search for surplus everything.

The pandemic starkly reveals the diseased cultures of the University. Before its second wave, the urgency to return to campus, and to commit to face-to-face teaching in some form, catalysed closures and quarantining across the global North, with a knock-on for community infection (Brooks-Pollock et al. 2020; Yarney 2020). This made clear how University risk assessments are not framed against the lived experiences of its communities, rather by its relationship to value. As a result, University workers face the reality of an internal struggle between the ability to access means

of subsistence through waged-labour and the need to protect their corporeal existence (Corona Contract 2020). In the pandemic, University work accelerates the physical and mental ill-being of the anxiety machine.

This is the ordered, liberal freedom of the University, which presents individuals with the stark choice of economic survival, as long as they maintain the risk for their own health within parameters set by an institution driven by surplus. Thus, UK institutions have focused upon no detriment policies and mitigation actions for students, without a similar focus upon staff in relation to working conditions. Rather than a focus upon vulnerability, empathy, best endeavours, care and compassion, the reality that HE is engineered around the health of competing institutions, rather than society as a whole or those who labour in it, has been laid bare. As a result, cultures are reinforced that normalise suffering, as a culturally-acceptable, self-harming activity rooted in extreme and unacceptable sets of behaviours (Turp 2001). These erupt from pathological forms of managerialism as ideology.

Through the pandemic, a high plasticity of policy and practices was generated as reaction to events with the appearance of risk-based control. For instance, Durham University proposed, and later rescinded, a move to fully-online degrees, whilst the University of Sheffield proposed salary cuts and promotion freezes for staff, which were withdrawn due to increased student numbers. Elsewhere, workloads have been exacerbated through cuts to casualised staff and graduate teaching assistants, and a reduction in research allocations in some institutions. For University workers, the uncertainties revealed through the politics of austerity, and concomitant changes to policy, governance, regulation and funding, are amplified through reactive management to Covid-19. Moreover, this is enabled through a lack of sector-wide, labour solidarity (WIN 2020), necessitating precarious staff organising

around their own job protection plans (NTEU 2020).

Constant changes to policy, organisational restructuring, an increase in technocratic bureaucracy, and the imposition of control through performance data, reflect meta-analyses of UK HE senior management (Erickson et al. 2020). These are generally negative in conceptualisation (Halffman and Radder 2015; Perry and Miller 2017), and connect to analyses of weak autonomy and task control for staff (Carvalho and Videira 2019), alongside an increase in the negative imaginaries and vulnerabilities of workers (Chabot 2018; Tarsafi et al. 2015). As Erickson et al. (2020: 10) note from their extensive survey, the management regimes of universities have ‘considerable human health consequences’, characterised by ‘an acute situation of endemic bullying and harassment, chronic overwork, high levels of mental health problems, general health and wellbeing problems’.

This is where the universe of value places individuals who aspire to management or leadership, precisely because the treadmill of competition between institutions and sectors demands the search for relative surplus-value. The expansion of the system reveals managerial responsibilities as an obligation to become productive, impactful, excellent, in the name of economic value. As a result, managers ‘are obligated to force work on those over whom [they] have been given power’ (Cleaver 2017: 4). Moreover, they are obligated to impose particular kinds of work that reinforce a privileged hierarchy through particular, patriarchal and colonial forms of quality control. For some bodies and identities this means menial, proletarianised work, whilst for others it means a constant search for surplus.

It is important to recognise that these markers of toxic managerialism and of diseased, performative cultures are a function of capitalist reproduction (Ruuska, 2018). Streek (2016: 6) refers to a ‘Multi-morbidity in which different disorders coexist

and reinforce each other.’ Here, social entropy and uncertainty are mapped against the collapse of flows of accumulation and rates of profit, in particular amplified by the long depression. Demands for government intervention like institutional bailouts cannot rectify ‘pathological conditions’, no matter how optimistic the promises of restructuring in the name of business-as-usual (ibid.: 14). For Streek (ibid.: 15), ‘social integration [is increasingly] based upon collective resignation’, precisely because of: the ongoing inability to overcome uncertainty; the attrition on public goods in the name of the commodity and privatisation; intercommunal and intergenerational, economic injustices; environmental despoliation; authoritarian and oligarchic government; the rise of debt; and the decline of growth.

Cynical managerialism is reinforced by cynicism about managerial cultures, which actively connect ‘more successful capitalists and their intellectual affiliates’ (Chuǎng 2019b). Thus, it is important to understand the relationship between the lived experiences of individuals and communities struggling inside institutions, and the cultures of those institutions as they compete for surplus-value. Across HE sectors, more successful capitalist universities and their intellectual affiliates, including think tanks and consultancies, are driven to intensify work through a belief in productivity, efficiency, value-for-money, and new forms of public management, like the World Bank’s ‘science of delivery’ (Devarajan 2013). As a result, pathological managerialism reshapes the idea of the University around commodity-valuation rooted in the measurement of teacher/student performance, like income generation, research outputs, employability metrics, or student outcomes and progression rates (Hoareau McGrath et al. 2015).

Performative cultures subvert the concrete work that teachers and students do inside and outside the classroom. They make hope a weak, counter-hegemonic weapon through the imposition

and internalisation of control (Iorio and Tanabe 2019). Such cultures predicate (and generate): unhealthy attachments that are anxious, avoidant or fearful; feeling forsaken and abandoned; feeling uninspired, disconnected and dissonant; powerlessness and despair; and, oppressive relationships (Scioli and Biller 2009). At *The End of History*, the promise of a degree and access to the elite has become an object of pacification, whilst advocates of academic freedom (Furedi 2017) reproduce culture wars that reinforce social conservatism and economic liberalism (Davies 2018). This hides the fact that the University is promissory note, dripping in debt, which can never be redeemed. Perhaps only a run on the University, designed to overflow it socially, might enable us to move beyond.

At issue is how to be generative and generous in the process of negating the institutions and cultures that themselves negate our subjectivities. Marx (1859) was clear that this means working to abolish the capitalist mode of production, which ‘conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life’, and ‘determines [human] consciousness’. Given the problematics of meritocratic progression, and the reinforcement of elite structures, the negation of the University and its associations is central to a new appreciation. However, this requires a cultural turn away from a pathology that has infected and inflected both work and workers, such that revolutionary subjectivity and solidarity are lacking.

This lack erupts between different fractions of the University workforce, and between that workforce and wider society, and at *The End of History* it appears impossible to dream beyond the myths of our cultures as pathologies. In response, it is important to understand what the University’s cultures deny or disable, including how pathologies of money work to sublate life through ‘the direct reification of universal labour-time i.e., the product of universal alienation and of the supersession of all individual

labour' (ibid.). This is the University worker's self-reference in relation to money, through which their characteristics are reduced to qualities of things that objectify them (Marx 1844/1974), and further estrange them from themselves, their work, the products of their work, and their world (Marx and Engels 1846/1998).

Describing the relationship between the cultures that emerge from disabling structures and individual narratives of existence inside-and-against those cultures, for instance through reference to quit-lit and angst-lit, illuminates the pathologies of the institution (Gill 2009; Morrish and Prialux 2020). Moreover, these pathologies are revealed differentially once they are overlain with, or perhaps undercut by, intersectional analyses. Crucially, revelation highlights how legitimacy is maintained in relation to discipline and debt, as capital seeks to overcome its limits by reproducing new ones (Deleuze and Guattari 1983). Pushing beyond such pathological, structural subordination, requires an anti-culture of abolition, which grapples with ongoing settler-colonial and racial-capitalist structures, and their relations of subordination. It requires an understanding of pathological cultures in relation to the institutional compulsion to produce value, entangled with: first, the potential for generative ideas, customs and social behaviours that reflect self-reference and a human relation to self and other; and second, a stunted cycle of being, doing and becoming, as a hopeless and helpless search for surplus everything in the anxiety machine.

The pathology of the anxiety machine

In the University, anxiety and hopelessness reinforce each other, creating a diseased terrain. Through associations with other rentier and value-driven businesses, it proletarianises work that is often regarded as a labour of love. There is an extent to which the individual needs an engagement with anxiety, in order to extend

their consciousness and embrace the possibility for individual freedom. However, inside the University, anxiety feels infinite, rather than having finite limits that might be overcome. As trust in oneself is conditioned around value, the present remains anchored in the potential loss of the future. In this way, the University acts as a container for forms of *dasein* or being-in-the-world, grounded in fears of the annihilation of the Self and personal ruin. In the capitalist University anxiety is concrete and everyday, and reflects a pathological fear of abandonment because it also seeks to annihilate any sense of *mitsein*, or being-with, as a mode of solidarity. In the pandemic, abandonment has been shown to be a very real outcome for individuals made precarious.

Moreover, as the institution's pathology forces us to consider how to save ourselves inside a toxic system, environmental rupture is forgotten. There were moments as the long depression opened up, through Occupy, Rhodes Must Fall and Black Lives Matter, and then once Covid-19 fractured the circulatory and productive circuits of capital, for being-with and being-in the world differently. Yet, in the lack of a concrete, counter-hegemonic movement the only deep adaptation possible is for capital, as institutional workloads are intensified, as an attempt to overcome the entropy of the system. This illuminates the reality that the financial and epidemiological crises of value limit responses to socio-environmental tragedy, and simply leave individuals and communities with a sense of *solastalgia*, or a loss of place catalysed by lived experiences of negative environmental change (Galway et al. 2017).

The hopeless University leaves *solastalgia* to individuals and their communities, whilst it reinforces damaging and extractive human metabolic relations with nature that further estrange humans from their world. In predicating its cultures upon scarce resources like privilege and status, and hiding intermediation of

the relationship between capital and wage labour, it exacerbates the algorithmic, mechanisation of bodies, as sites of arrangement and exploitation, as well as of expropriation for those on the margins. Instead of cultural turns that are generative of a liveable *mitsein*, subjectivity is framed by the reification of certain bodies, which gives certain individuals particular, highly valued identities. At *The End of History*, these identities shape homogenous cultural perspectives of success, reproduced institutionally as a denial or negation of individual subjectivity (Garrido 2019), and of nature and the environment.

This is ‘the sociopathological labor of the university’ (Harney and Moten 2013: 27). It shapes diseased cultures defined as professional through characteristics of efficiency and responsibility, and ‘all built upon the theft, the conquest, the negligence of the outcast mass intellectuality of the undercommons’ (ibid.: 33). The *undercommons* of workers made marginal in the University by the desperate search for wage labour have their skills, knowledge and capabilities commodified, and their sociability turned against them and their society. This is Houellebecq’s (2015) individual and collective, regressive deformations, which make solidarity so difficult to enact as a counter-hegemonic project, rather than a mode of survival.

At *The End of History*, the University and its workers continue: either, to believe in the possibility for collective self-improvement through an enthusiastic dedication to work; or, to find ways to cope, hope, dope or consume, in the face of pathological phenomena (Streek 2016). In response, there is a need to refuse modes of hope that require optimism elevated ‘to the status of a public virtue and civic responsibility’ and then labels pessimism as a ‘a socially harmful personal deficiency’ (ibid.: 42). Instead, the pathology of the University reinforces anxiety because its leaders demand that its workers are never sceptical, and that they become

an active part of the institutional family. Such activity maintains a focus upon continuous personal enhancement in the face of competitive pessimism. This is so deeply-entrenched that not even the reinforcing realities of financial, epidemiological and climate crises can move University cultures beyond their pathological insistence on reproducing value.

Even worse, the pathology of the anxiety machine has destroyed the autonomy and agency that could have defined alternative paths from within its own structures and associations, precisely because its imaginary is shaped by the symbolism of value and reproduction of synthetic, economic growth (ibid.: 150). This limited imaginary is the restricted consciousness and self-awareness of the institution, which Lacan notes registers the close links to what we experience as reality (Johnston 2018). This imaginary erupts from intersecting experiences, emotions, histories, narratives, bodies, cultures, projections and introjections, such that the institution and its workers communicate what they imagine the world is like. As Johnston (ibid.) argues, ‘the Imaginary points to core analytic ideas like transference, fantasy, and the ego’, and these amplify the ways in which the abstract symbolism of capitalist reality deforms *dasein* and *mitsein*. Moreover, here the imaginary of the University seeks fulfilment in castrating its workers, and in further deforming their desires as hopes for better working conditions, or for a public or co-operative university, because no other template is available or deemed possible.

Certain bodies and identities are mutilated or castrated through narratives of accommodation. For instance, the pathology of the anxiety machine cannot tolerate engaged, subjective stances that are ‘willful’ (Ahmed 2014) or that are stolen to enable culture wars (Davies 2018). Through accommodation, the wider, social fears of inclusion for which the University stands-in appears to demand a synthesis that hides colonial, patriarchal privilege

through equality and diversity strategies, or by closing attainment gaps. However, this maintains estrangement because differences in identity markers are measured inside structures that are unable to overcome the power differentials and hierarchies that order individuals and groups. Thus, singular bodies can be labelled as anxious or in deficit, and to be abandoned, annihilated or conditioned inside the institution, because they do not measure-up to particular ways of imagining University work.

This is the further loss of subjectivity, because singular individuals are imagined against particular norms that reinforce the constant loss of themselves, their work and their society. As a result, the pathology of the anxiety machine damages the solid ground or essence of its workers (their *dasein*), because its cultures and collectivities impose beliefs that have to be internalised, and catalyse double consciousness, or battle fatigue. As Dowrick (1997) notes, *mitsein* is distorted where the individual is bound to another through dependency. This damages a sense of legitimacy and the right to good life experiences, in part because of the disciplinary possibility of academic death, both metaphorically and literally. Where academic being is shaped in very particular, valuable ways, the possibility of being without one's academic self, as surplus labour or precarious employee, triggers loss, grief, introspection, and depression.

In this pathological space, the hopeless University forces its workers to live based upon the fantasies that its judgements will give meaning to their lives. As a result, it limits the possibility for solid ground inside the University worker, precisely because of the fear that it will abandon or forget them. As the University demands self-doubt and self-absorption in its plans, such that it dominates purpose, meaning, fear of meaninglessness and fear of nothingness, it becomes more difficult for the worker to feel that they are a unity or a whole person. The University forces its

workers to cling to a system that is a power outside of themselves, in order to attempt to find a personal unity. Entangled with such dread, the work as a labour of love remains as nostalgia, or as hope that complexes can be integrated and overcome. Instead, the University's desires shape those of its workers, and catalyse responses that are conformist, fearful or despairing. These risk becoming hopeless in the face of institutional forms, where they collapse into hopes for status, privilege, promotion, and security, inside a system that is making living conditional upon toxic modes of knowledge production, circulation and exchange.

In this system, modes of denial, repression and disassociation represent trauma that is both social and individual (Herman 1992). Thus, the revelation of sexual harassment and abuse, as peer- and contra-power on campuses, exposes a continuum of violence in the institution (for instance, Mellgren and Ivert 2019; Richman et al. 1999). The institution maintains credibility through modes of silencing and secrecy in policy, by questioning credibility and denial, and in calls to move on, especially where perpetrators have power and where victims are devalued or marginalised already, because they are caregivers, queer, female, black or disabled. This calls into question the ethics of non-disclosure agreements (Weston 2020), gagging orders and institutional approaches to complaints (Ahmed 2021), and cultures of silence (Berg et al. 2016), which have seen a number of women academics resign from institutions.

Moreover, trauma is generalised in terms of other forms of violence against bodies, including in restructuring, the loss of tenure, ongoing precarity, punitive performance management, workplace monitoring and workload intensification. The ground of the University is shaped by tolerating, condoning or admiring the efficiencies driven by performative governance, through senior leadership working proactively (Erikson et al. 2020; Spooner 2017). Such leadership seeks the pathological regulation of

emotional states, in order that individuals can constantly adapt to intensification, for instance through: overwork and the denial of personal and social reproduction; or through the excessive emotional labour demanded of certain bodies, in enabling institutions to do diversity work, or to exert emotion management.

It is against this reality that academic freedom or University autonomy becomes meaningless. Such hopes are shaped by the value of abstract labour (the socially necessary labour time for entrepreneurship, employability or the knowledge economy) rather than concrete, human activity (to tackle crises of social reproduction like climate forcing or poverty). The pathology of the anxiety machine is the desperation for productive activity as the source of consciousness, and this can only reify alienated activity or the alienation of activity, alongside the idealisation of the abstract individual (white, entrepreneurial man). It feels impossible to find other outlets for self-esteem and self-authoring, rather than reproducing the impoverished ego-identity of University work. The latter frames individuals as worthless and incapable of functioning beyond its strictures and structures, and as a result, it reinforces self-blame and negative self-conception. As melancholia rather than mourning appears an outcome of the psychological damage of trauma and the lack of agency in the face of crises, the explosion in University workers' ill-being is unsurprising.

University ill-being

Each workplace holds its own horror stories, and the perception of universities as ivory towers tends either to deny or make them invisible. Recalibrated around resilience, mindfulness and well-being, the tendency is either to deny the reasons why such support programmes are required or to centre individual failings and defects as their rationale. Such denial also stretches to the

conditional outcomes of such programmes (McConville et al. 2017). As a result, structural modes of bullying and othering, and their concomitant physical and mental health impacts, are ignored or filed under equality and diversity work (Pörhölä et al. 2019).

Research on the UK, Australia and North America has identified the annihilation of tenure, autonomy, collegiality and role clarity, alongside concomitant rises in stress (Kinman and Johnson 2019). Many university workers report overload and fractured work-related identities impacting well-being, with issues of labour rights and work-life balance being amplified by mistrust, uncertainty, fatigue and speed-up (Zábrodská et al. 2018). This is amplified for those with caring or family responsibilities, for whom the ethic and morality of performance is a constant reminder of institutional inhumanity (Steinþórsdóttir et al. 2017). Normative management of such issues has focused upon targeted interventions and benchmarking, in relation to job demands, autonomy, peer and management support, relationships at work, role clarity and change management, rather than the abolition of alienating labour (Wray and Kinman 2020). However, this tends towards forms of ‘wilful exhaustion’, or a commitment to overwork as ‘the inevitable outcome today of a love of education’ (Allen 2017: 167).

A horizontal sharing of experiences by University workers pivots around disrespect, uncertainty and denial, as well as a lack of autonomy, and an increasingly fractured working experience that comes to dominate life. An increasing volume of published material highlights the relationship between mental ill-health and organisational policies that centre the desires of the institution over those of the individual and their family (Levecque et al. 2017). As social reproduction and family life are subservient to job demands with increasingly lower levels of autonomy, existence is increasingly distorted.

In response, there are reports of staff quitting, self-medicating or becoming increasingly alienated inside the Academy, alongside the negative effects of attempting to compensate for overwork and ill-health through a focus upon University life as privilege. Instead, large amounts of emotional energy, double consciousness, self-denial or cognitive dissonance, are required, in order to survive and carve out a career that is increasingly seen as individualistic and dependent upon one's own human capital and networks (O'Dwyer et al. 2018). This is true for *both* teachers *and* researchers, whose being is objectified, such that it becomes an ill-being, conditioned by managerial cultures of performativity, and competition over scarce and reified resources.

This has been described in terms of *Weltschmerz* (Hall 2018: 161), 'or a world weariness that lies beyond anxiety, anguish or ennui, [which] reflects a deeper sense of hopelessness about the academic project.' In the bureaucratic, pandemic University, the collapse of University sociability and co-operation beyond the market has become clear. Instead, processes of subjugation and hegemonic norms of production have accelerated social fragmentation, anxiety, overwork, melancholia and the denial of access to social wealth. In the hopeless University at *The End of History*, 'such despair is connected to a loss of autonomy that is itself rooted in the inability to escape from capital's domination' (ibid.), reproduced as 'constant self-judgement' (ibid.: 162).

This is felt differentially based upon one's relationship to the mode of production, as precarious or casualised, or when placed at the racialised, gendered, disabled, homosexual and queer margins of society. These concrete experiences offer spaces for understanding 'how to generate forms of solidarity and association that will enable us to combat *both* the automatic subject of capital, *and* the way in which it forces us to deform and degrade ourselves' (ibid.: 182). However, the systemic reproduction of vulnerability

continues to degrade lives, for instance in reports: first, of extreme levels of acute and chronic anxiety and depression in PhD students (Nature 2019); and second, of student and staff suicides in relation to overwork and negative performance management. Here, we remember the lives and loves of students who have taken their own lives, as well as teachers like Malcolm Anderson at Cardiff University, and researchers like Stefan Grimm at Imperial College, London. We also remember outsourced workers like Stanford Jackson, an engineer who suffered a heart attack whilst on call out at the University of London for whose rights the International Workers of Great Britain had to struggle.

A large part of the issue for University workers is the inability to take their bodies out of the line of fire, witnessed during the pandemic in the manifold ways that work invaded the home, alongside the extension of the working day. At this time, those with more privilege could: ignore the pain of their peers compelled to attend campuses; be thankful that they were spared that pain; or confront that pain as it illuminated the limits and contradictions of the institution's humanism. The focus upon bodies and pain is important in the analysis of Chabot (2018) on global burnout. He argues that the transfer of costs and risks, the commodification of life, the assault on living standards, compounded by corruption and austerity, and overlain with demographic and intersectional injustices can be read in the ill-health of bodies that 'often know more than our blinkered psyches' (ibid.: 5). The body's response to overwork, a deterioration in labour conditions, ongoing competition, and so on, is a mark of what is reasonable and what is unreasonable, and the ability to push back or refuse.

For Harney and Moten (2013), along with Halberstam (2013), understanding corporeal and mental deterioration, and how to reference this against a fugitive existence, is central. This is amplified by the institution-in-pandemic asking ill academics to

perform online, and by reports of academics passing away during online classes. The latter was reportedly the case with Paola De Simone at the Universidad Argentina de la Empresa in Buenos Aires. For Halberstam (ibid.) it is not possible to fix this scenario. Instead, the requirement is for ‘making common cause with the brokenness of being, a brokenness, I would venture to say, that is also blackness, that remains blackness, and will, despite all, remain broken’ (ibid.: 5). Being asked to make accommodation with a system that denies that it is the cause of illness demands that we

take apart, dismantle, tear down the structure that, right now, limits our ability to find each other, to see beyond it and to access the places that we know lie outside its walls. We cannot say what new structures will replace the ones we live with yet, because once we have torn shit down, we will inevitably see more and see differently and feel a new sense of wanting and being and becoming (ibid.: 6).

His argument is also central to Moten’s (2017, 2018a, 2018b) argument in his trilogy, *consent not to be a single being*, where existence and essence are so deformed and treated with chronic, abject indifference, that new modes of being are required. As with Holloway (2003), Moten (2017) highlights the scream, which demands an alternative, and that is amplified through the violence of settler-colonialism and patriarchy as cultural hegemons. The scream reflects a sense that authentic subjectivity is impossible for many, who are reluctant to acknowledge their lack of unity, or who cannot contain a set of fractured existences. It reflects the impossibility of defining an authentic being-in-themselves, or for-themselves.

For Moten (ibid.: xiii, *emphasis* in original), the apogee of such denial is represented by black feminism, as ‘the *animaterial* ecology

of black and thoughtful stolen life as it steals away.’ The lack of representation for black women in senior positions in universities reflects specific myths and cultures that are symbolic of HE. It is symbolic of how those cultures are reproduced consciously and unconsciously, through processes and ecologies of marginalisation, which themselves deny the legitimacy of being for particular types of bodies and minds. These bodies unsettle, just as the curriculum attempts to impose particular modes of certainty onto a social terrain that unsettles where it does not demonstrate scientific rationality.

Inside the University, flows of power, defined hegemonically by patriarchy and coloniality, orient individuals through organisational cultures that make ‘norms appear palpable’ (Ahmed 2017: 43). Those who represent patriarchal and colonial domination are able to base their access to privilege, status and resources upon the exploitation of others through a deeply stratified and hierarchical organisation (Dyer-Witheford 2015). These norms are reinforced institutionally as societal cultures of whiteness are reinforced, and this leads to a focus upon exceptional cases (those who succeed and give credence to an alienating system), double and false consciousness (the invisibility of a true being), micro-aggressions (which give rise to forms of gendered and racialised battle fatigue), alongside white fragility. Institutional cultures maintain perceptual segregation and pervasive forms of prejudice

Segregation is a pivotal concept in relation to ill-being. For Marx (Krader 1974) separation and estrangement are generative of the reproduction of capital, which subsumes human skills, knowledge and capabilities for-value. In doing so, inhuman conditions of work are shaped by the introjection of managerial control and command as a form of self-repression. Moreover, segregation prioritises the commodity-as-subject, and presents humans as non-subjects. In this demand that bodies assimilate themselves

to particular norms, forms of psychic violence are enacted (Washington 1977). Therefore, ill-being reflects the reproduction of particular kinds of University labourers in singular bodies, as a means of constructing institutions that generate universal cultural, intellectual and social capitals. Through technocratic governance, competition and commodification, surplus can be accumulated from these capitals.

In this process, different roots, traditions, histories, relationships, ways of knowing, and crucially, ways of being are disconnected and negated. Specific existences and essences are demanded, which are ruptured by grief, denial, anger, dissonance, passive-aggressive withdrawal, and disassociation. At *The End of History*, capital maintains a death grip over the possibilities for alternatives. It entangles ill-being inside those who are made really or potentially surplus with the defence of its own autonomy. Amplified by individual isolation and fear, ill-being is shackled to the conditions of competition inside the University *peloton*.

The University peloton

The pathology of the University is immanent to the illogic of competition. Through this, the deep, colonial and patriarchal realities of the market, the division of labour, private property and the compulsion for commodity-exchange modulate University work. This compulsion, conditioned internally through performance management and externally through metrics and institutional ranking, has been described in terms of the dynamics of the *peloton* in professional cycling (Hall and Bowles 2016; Hall 2018). This argument holds that toxic cultures of self-harm are shaped through demands for endless self-sacrifice and overwork, for the benefit of particular, institutional leaders.

In cycling, these might be: team leaders looking to win races or place towards the top of the general classification; team managers

and *Directeurs Sportifs* organising teamwork to maximise returns; (super)domestiques who ride in the service of the team and its leader rather than their own success; specialists hunting for success, for instance in sprints, mountain stages or one day events; and professional services like coaches, doctors, therapists, *soigneurs*, and mechanics. In the University, they might be: professors looking to win grants or place towards the top of the excellence ratings; Vice-Chancellor's Offices organising teamwork to maximise returns; teaching and research staff who work in the service of the team and its leader rather than their own success; early career researchers hunting for success, for instance in tenure, grants and awards; and professional services' staff like research and teaching administrators, librarians and studio technicians.

Within cycling/University teams, self-sacrifice and working for the leader/Vice-Chancellor/Professor, who represents the team, is enabled by the deployment of organisational and technological efficiency in order to generate marginal gains. The culture of the *peloton*/HE sector, as the collection of competing teams, is reinforced by social forces and relations of production, as cycling teams/research groups/teaching units/universities compete against each other for scarce resources (wins, bonuses, impact, ratings and so on). In the *peloton*, just as in the University, there is an acceptance of *omertà* or codes of silence as a means of maintaining control. This includes: making invisible anxiety over conditions of labour; the lack of transparency over decision-making for reward, recognition and restructuring; the use of gagging and non-disclosure orders; and the quiet compulsion to accept overwork in the name of an allegedly, higher cause. Silence normalises the cognitive dissonance required to hold *both* social co-operation *and* pathological competition as organising principles. Thus, in striving for success there have been examples of bullying, corruption, hypocrisy, bad faith and self-medication in the cycling

peloton (Rendall 2006; Walsh 2015), which mirror the examples of ill-being we have seen reported by University workers.

Crucially, the requirements of co-operation bind teams together inside institutions, because they are competing for scarce resources, like recognition. In generating shared disciplinary and problem-based contexts, co-operation also binds together teams in cognate fields in different institutions. However, through externally-imposed, quality and risk-based measures, they are also forced to compete for scarce resources. In spite of the potential for co-operation, the habitual compulsion to compete drives hopelessness precisely because economic obligations negate humanity. The reality of competition is estrangement between individuals, teams and institutions, such that humane values can only be defined through the market. Co-operation and collaboration are conditioned by the commodity and the market.

The duality of this hopelessness is represented in academia's imaginaries that inspire: empowerment/inferiority; engagement/burnout; and, enlightenment/isolation. Trying to make sense of these contradictions demands *dietrologia*, or the search for hidden dimensions to official explanations of surface reality. This pushes individuals to focus upon the symptoms of their distress, rather than its reality in alienated labour. Yet the hopeless University, like all other capitalist forms, works to obfuscate meaning or enlightenment, as it hides the realities of alienated labour behind discourses of value-for-money, student experience, labour of love, impact and excellence. Moreover, it uses performance management, workload models, the separation of both teaching and research and teachers from professional services staff, and the idealisation of the professor, in order to manage disappointment and anxiety.

The role of the professor in the University *peloton* is fundamental in designating the idealised historical and material form of life in the hopeless University. Access to relative forms of privilege, status and

resources rests upon the ongoing exploitation of a hierarchy with the professor at its apex. The valorisation process rooted in impact measures, knowledge exchange/transfer, commercialisation, public engagement and entrepreneurship, recalibrates the University *peloton* around particular team or institutional performers. These individuals have a stake in the University as a generator of power and prestige, and a stake in the transnational circuits that define their work. As such, professors represent ‘a specifically academic ideal’ that is distinct from intellectual life in society (Bourdieu 1988: 37). Inside the University, too many concrete existences are grounded in the abstract and reified labour of professors, for whom fears of the transience and scarcity of power ensure that it is hoarded or defended, individually or inside research teams. This process amplifies and transmits anxiety throughout the academic *peloton*, reinforced through performance management.

Ill-being and performance management, as responses to elitist, competitive pathologies, reflect the gravitational pull of the universe of value. As we have seen, at *The End of History* the University invokes cultures of self-harm and overwork as it attempts to reduce the necessary labour required to enable its workers to re-produce their costs as wages. It lengthens the working day, looks for new markets, or ensures that its work infects the home, in order to capture surplus-labour that can be materialised as profit (surpluses). Public policy focused upon value-for-money and productivity in effect codify overwork. However, processes of subsumption and re-engineering enable competitive advantage and relative surplus-value. New public management methods, workload agreements, absence/attendance management policies, and so on, are a means of overcoming the limits of the University *peloton*, in terms of the length of the working day, limited academic skillsets, or unproductive labour.

In response to intersecting crises, the *peloton's* response is to

the movement of absolute and relative surplus-value across the terrains of teaching and research, as an inhuman, social need. In the pandemic, this frames ill-being through reactive policy and the desperate implementation of intensified forces of production, aimed at maintaining flows of fee and accommodation income. This reminds us of Marcuse's (1969b) belief that the dependency of the University on 'the financial and political goodwill of the community and of the government', shapes its (non-)place 'in the larger struggle for change'. As the University stands for 'an ever more methodical creation of conformist needs and satisfactions' (ibid.), its search is increasingly pathological. Inside the University *peloton*, the result is a fragmented, mutilated and frustrated existence. Thus, meaningful change at the end of *The End of History* demands a deeper understanding of individual existences that have been subsumed under the compulsion to live for-value. Inside the *peloton*, the struggle is for position, rather than for liberation from it.

Thus, the absolute movement of the University *peloton* is a tragedy for its workers. It generates pseudo-selves, vulnerabilities, estrangements, half-lives, narrow or false existences, and solitude (Dowrick 1997). This denies the everyday estrangement of those who have suffered racism, sexism, workplace bullying and harassment, and demands that workers remain faithful, through *omertà*, to the *peloton* as a family, rather than to themselves as beings capable of sensuous human activity. In this pathological adherence to corporate values, there is *both* a loss of meaning in the work (Veltman 2016), *and* the generation of pain through heteronormative and colonial quantification (Bhattacharyya 2018).

Across the *peloton*, specific numbers become exclusive and contain a negative character for individuals who cannot attain the exclusivity they define. Particular forms of quantification generalise particular cultures of performance, as a negative form

of relating individuals to each other. As such, relationships take the form of measures rather than having qualitative characteristics (Hegel 2018). Modes of measuring are acts of coercion, applying immanent negative and positive judgements over behaviours and actions, which threatens to negate identities (Hegel 1942: 94 S95). For these bodies and their existence and essence, the University at *The End of History* is at best indifferent, as it further objectifies conditions of labour.

In this indifference, explanations for reality search for hidden dimensions but too often end-up fractured and with limited analytical range. As staff and students were coerced back to campus during the second wave of coronavirus, this simply demonstrated that the objective conditions of work and life are '*alien property*, as the reality of other juridical persons... the absolute realm of *their will*' (Marx 1857/1993: 452, *emphasis in original*). In the University this 'process is naturalised, with wage labour constantly fulfilling the conditions of its own existence and for the existence of capital' (ibid.: 504). Yet, cultures abstracted by competition, private property, the division of labour and commodity exchange, ensure that individuals see in others 'not the *realisation* of [their] own freedom, but the *barrier* to it' (Marx 1843: 164, *emphasis in original*). Thus, in the pandemic, the student experience is weaponised against academics, and the class composition of University labourers is so fragmented that it cannot work for threatened, precarious workers.

The competition of the *peloton* is a pathologically-obnoxious game, which is immediately denied whilst being obvious to all. Policies of surveillance, monitoring and prestige, are enforced by strategies of domination, alongside structures that give particular individuals 'mastery of the strategic positions which give control over the progress of the competitors' (Bourdieu 1988: 88). Competition depends upon collusion in its reproductive conditions, and these

in turn are toxic because they mutilate humans and degrade their work, stripping it of its intellectual characteristics. In turn, these become the property of others, through automation or intellectual property. In the scramble for something better, the individual subjects themselves further to the despotism of overwork, enacted in front of screens, in committees, in academic citizenship, and in obligatory reputation management. These annihilate the capacity for social reproduction, self-care and knowing the world. As a result, the University *peloton* is the annihilation of life by acceleration, as a terrible mechanism of control, which defenestrates being whilst it maintains the appearance of autonomy.

Reification and social metabolic control

Whilst it is important not to essentialise particular fractions of the University workforce, much work has been undertaken on what Connell (1987) referred to as hegemonic masculinity. This heuristic situates a field of legitimate attitudes and practices that perpetuate inequality and power. Such analyses have been adapted (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), but the argument is that this field enables certain bodies to gain privilege, status and power through the replication of values, structures, cultures and practices that organise society (Jewkes et al. 2015). Although masculinities are nuanced and dynamic, they tend to be other than LGBTQIA and woman.

The hegemonic symbolism of masculinity is not-black and not-proletarian or working class, yet by instantiating access to status upon apparently masculine characteristics, it enables patriarchy and settler-colonialism to be reproduced. Thus, subordinate and marginal masculinities work for a configuration of practices of masculinity as a means of organising society. This includes the instantiation of pathological cultures inside organisations like universities, which enforce the alignment of bodies, beings and

existences with particular values and modes of performance.

Too often alignments are reported as traumatic and violent, for instance for black women or mothers (UKEHRC 2019). Navigating the white, male, straight and able University takes a significant toll through the ongoing projection of hopes onto heroic, pathological and methodological ideals of privilege. This is situated against cultures of intersectional injustice through which hegemonic, masculine norms are maintained, and certain individuals and communities are expected to maintain or reproduce marginalised forms of work. It is also situated against cultures in which casualisation and precarious labour have been normalised for certain groups as a colonial matrix of power (Mignolo and Walsh 2018).

The capitalist University's essence projects patriarchal and colonial forms of hopelessness through: its obsession with specific ideations of its *community* or *family*; its careless, wasteful compulsion to compete; its articulation of growth, power and privilege through white, male struggle that can be universalised; the reproduction of imposter syndromes and microaggressions; the colonisation of decolonising; and, the ignoring of decoloniality. At *The End of History*, the banality of such norms has been institutionalised to such an extent that the tendency is for engagement in University life to be an act of collusion. Being other than this, for instance by activating a black, feminist aesthetic, or through a subaltern, fugitive existence, demands deeper layers of emotional energy and labour.

For the University, this toxic reproduction of colonial and patriarchal matrices of power locks it into the impossibilities of capitalist reproduction, rather than a sustainable, egalitarian, communal reordering of the possibilities for life. These matrices, situated through the hegemony of knowledge production from the global North, ensure that the metabolic relations between

humans and nature is degrading, exploitative and extractive, and that maintain 'ecological rifts' (Foster 2011). Whilst the University is complicit in ideas of green growth, sustainable development, militarisation, and unnecessary consumption, it renders ecologically-informed, associative ways of living impossible. As Saito (2017) argues, the forms and associations of capitalist reproduction dominate the concrete, material world, in ways that are unregulated and deregulated through the valorisation of capital's material conditions and the negation of its limits.

One question is whether a new, revolutionary subjectivity might erupt as the destruction of the world is made visible, and the role of intellectual work in that process. Here, indigenous ways of knowing, as more than human ownership of knowledge, place and time, are crucial in refusing coloniality. The pathological, patriarchal coloniality of the University estranges its workers from place, nature and peers, through subjugation and dominion. Its cultures are reproduced to deny any reconnection of existence and essence as new modes of being, and instead it maintains objectification through measurement, disciplinary separation, subsumption and competition. Its histories are disciplinary, in the sense *both* that they build autonomy and control for the institution rather than its workers, *and* that they are defined through separate rather than integrated subjects. This diverts human, practical energy towards division and obsessions with ideologically-defined evidence.

The metabolism of the University erupts from this separation, maintained across the *peloton* as an incessant process of interaction between humans, nature and environment for-value (Saito 2017). Through cultures of conquest, the original unity of humans and nature is dissolved, such that conceptually, the University is driven to solve nature or socio-environmental crises, rather than knowing them and being otherwise. This is the logic of the Inter-

Governmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC 2018) focus on adaptation, as mitigation stalls. Rather than seeking to compost the toxic, settler-colonial interactions between humans and nature, and thereby cultivate new modes of being, the impetus is to conquer the limits imposed by the environment on human activity (French et al. 2020). The University-as-is cannot see beyond a one-sided domination of the world, because it is forced to operate as if capitalism is transhistorical.

Thus, it cannot see beyond the illogic of abstract labour, which demands the production of artefacts and use-values that can be put to work. It then imposes prestige cultures, in order to maintain the reproduction of this illogic. Through evidence-based conquest of nature and the environment, the University becomes a machine for constantly modifying human desires, wants, needs and rationality, in ways that distort our relations to the world. This need to push beyond material limits makes it impossible to imagine other ways of knowing, doing and being in the world from within the University, precisely because those who dominate that space require new imaginaries to come with blueprints, deliverables, and benefits that enable surpluses. The reification of these modes of University life cannot escape value's gravity, strengthened by an expanding circuit of alienation (Hall 2018).

This circuit reinforces capital's social metabolic control, because it generates cultures that reproduce particular measures that deny singular being. In this, those who are other-than white, straight, able, men demonstrate ontological disobedience (Amsler 2020). Thinking about the role of Sycorax in *The Tempest* as a racialised, sexualised and witched memory that disciplines dominant narratives, Amsler (ibid.) argues that the other haunts hegemonic, ontological and epistemological positions. Such haunting includes the revelation of oppression, sexual harassment, racial injustice, empathy, solidarity, embodied and psychological ill-being and

possibility on campuses and beyond (Gabriel and Tate 2017). It also enables us to analyse the gender-specific requirements embedded within concepts like the University family, which come bundled with specific heteronormative features that themselves deny the potential trauma of such metaphors. In particular, such features map across to the division of University labour, which tends to allocate privilege and commodity labour to white men, and emotional and menial labour to women, and women of colour.

Such divisions disrupt the idea that humans are complex, dialectical and biologic beings, and instead they break them down into components enabling artificial isolation and partial functionality. These partial functions of learning, teaching, study, assessment, administration and professional services' work appear autonomous, and can be mastered giving a semblance of agency. Yet this reflects our 'impotence and the reality of an inhuman existence' (Marx 1894/1991: 324). The University offers a horizon for the self that is bound by inevitably limiting identifications and narcissistic needs, when instead self-awareness and vulnerability are required. Here, helplessness and hopelessness are determined against pathologies that force University labourers to reproduce particular, fragmented characteristics. These build fragmentation into the Self as teacher, researcher, administrator, friends, mentor, student and so on, reinforced intersectionally. This containment of working identities reduces the ability to identify where autonomy and agency actually exist.

Responses to the financial and epidemiological crises question whether the University has the patience, perseverance and compassion for its workers, or only imaginary or symbolic representations of them. Taking the performative potential of high-performing academics as the norm, and denying the realities of social reproduction, in relation to caring, parenthood, disability, managing trauma, navigating precarity, and so on, it reproduces

itself through judgements rooted in opinion and particular types of evidence, rather than trust. Thus, the hopeless University creates an imaginary for performance that it expects all others to map themselves onto. This imaginary is parasitic, because it sucks at the time, energy, hopes and fears of its workers, who cling to the symbolism of educational work as a labour of love. As a result, the institution demands its workers' constant availability, and without instigating a fugitive existence, those workers tend to collude as a form of self-harm. Through helplessness and hopelessness, workers do not recognise the power they have to act in ways that are self-responsible and forgiving, rather than in ways that are divisive, self-righteous, privileged or apathetic.

Instead, as Crawford (2019) argues, we need new myths that move beyond ideation of particular institutions that behave pathologically. Instead we might move towards new imaginaries for higher learning. These would reveal how the University is based upon subjectivities that are 'infinitely flexible, always on call, de-gendered, de-raced, declassed and careless of themselves and others' (Amsler and Motta 2017: 11). Braidotti (2011) centres this against a refusal of masculinity and its limiting, gendered ideations of becoming. She takes white men as the 'privileged referent of subjectivity, the standard-bearer of norm/law/logos', and highlights that 'masculinity is antithetical to the process of becoming' (*ibid.*: 36). Whilst these are often presented as emerging from individual belief systems and attitudes, rather than as an ongoing process of coloniality, they inhere through inequality and the inability of communities to see themselves reflected in their institutions. Here, the pathologies of the University echo beyond its forms, into access to other resources in employment, healthcare, housing, welfare and so on. This reproduces a distorted one-sidedness of life.

For infinite humanity?

The appearance of non-racism and gender-neutrality, embedded within equality and diversity work, enables a pathological discourse, which imposes upon the University a particular scientific rationality. It denies the specificity of difference, and instead frames its work around meritocracy and equality of opportunity, through the appearance of equal access to resources. In this, the University is compelled to reproduce asymmetrical forms of legitimacy and domination, through processes and structures that maintain the stability of white, colonial-settler privilege (Meyerhoff 2019; Tuck and Yang 2012). Where degenerative cultures emerge, it prioritises liberal reform focused upon unconscious bias training, visibility of staff in senior roles, a diverse curriculum, and mentoring and training designed for the specific needs of diverse staff. It maintains a symbolism that is hopeless in its archetype, with no way of delegitimising its toxic characteristics and pathological cultures.

In addressing what might be done about such cultures, there is a need to reject the moral dogma of the University at *The End of History*, which takes as immutable the market, private property, the division of labour and commodity exchange (Engels 1877/1987). Such morality is that of the managerial class, which dominates University workers from a particular value-driven perspective, and in relation to the demands of institutional associations. The dogmatic realities of impact, entrepreneurship, excellence, value-for-money, productivity and so on, shape a cultural formation that denies the validity and being of particular identities and groups. It demands that they distort their essence, in order to reflect the appearance of legitimacy. This is ‘the sublation of the natural self’ (Hegel 2018: 286, S488) to enable an alienating survival, because the alternative is heresy. Here, the self-objectification of the individual gains ‘the appearance of self-consciousness making itself conform to reality as much as its original character’s energy

and talents permit it' (ibid.: 286, S489).

The pathology of the University reinforces the inversion of subjectivity into objective, legitimate characteristics, and of humane values into economic value. This toxic movement of alienation might be negated through a universality that speaks to 'a communal diffusion of singularity', enabling generative unity-through-difference, rather than degenerative individuation (Moten 2018a: 73). In seeking to define cultures beyond fugitive existences that prefigure 'infinite humanity' (ibid.: 183), this refuse the positional, universal authority denoted by capital. This is a pedagogical process, required at the level of society, aimed at internalising one's own authority over oneself, such that one can activate '*being-in-itself*' as 'the singular individuality of self-consciousness' (Hegel 2018: 297, S510, *emphasis* in original). As an absolute movement of negativity, or a movement of absolute negativity, it requires cultures that nourish singular self-consciousness as the creative, sensuous, material totality of existence (Dunayevskaya 1991). This takes Moten's 'infinite humanity' as its referent.

Yet, the hopeless University can only offer scientific essentialism as its universal solution to crises of being. It seeks to fold philosophical and social scientific understandings into a diversification of that universal solution, in order to maintain particular, performative, lived experiences. Through a culture that commodifies human beings and nature, it reproduces capitalism as the *Absolute Idea* (Hegel 2010), and the universe of value as the *Spirit* of life (Hegel 2018). At issue is whether and how this process can be inverted, such that the form-determination of the University, created in relation to capitalist social relations through the generation of particular modes of knowledge production for-value, might be refused. Might an alternative sociability refuse the hegemonic mode of progress that situates knowledge

production from the global North as *The Absolute*? This would also refuse the pathological reproduction of the commodity, and the concomitant need to generate surpluses and economic growth through exploitation, expropriation and extraction.

In yearning for an anti-pathological mode of living that reflects the Self in the Other, this centres the immanence of the Self in universal, ‘infinite humanity’. This is the power of its negativity – the abolition of dominant positions that have brought the University and society to the precipice, and the sublation of those positions inside a world of difference, such that its overcoming forms part of a positive universality or *being-in-itself* (ibid.: 309-10, S528, *emphasis* in original). Sublation does not define new cultural forms as pathologies that reify or essentialise other identities, or identities that have been othered. Rather, it is the celebration of ‘the self which is *universal* within itself, as a restless movement’, and that ‘erases all objective essences that are supposed to confront consciousness and which makes those essences into a being of consciousness’ (ibid., *emphasis* in original). Difference is what unifies an infinite humanity, rather than what separates through measurement for-value. There is no need for a terrain of estranged activities that we are compelled to measure in a world moved by positive universality. However, this is not the world reproduced inside University through its methodological hopelessness.

Methodological hopelessness

The pathology of the University is immanent to its activities. Through its associational forms and its insinuation inside the circuits of finance capital, these spill-over from teaching, learning and research, into a range of allied economic functions, including knowledge exchange and transfer, public engagement, publishing, and consultancy. New bureaucracies, the deployment of technologies, divisions of labour and organisational development, broaden and intensify the work of the University. It is here that arguments have been made for the University as a factory, or that its forms and pathologies enable methodological work to be undertaken.

In both of these metaphors, the University is described as operating through particular paradigms that require specific sets of governing and organising techniques, rooted in particular forms of authoritarian, new public managerialism. The reality for students and academics is an incongruence between the generation of socially-useful knowledge that addresses global emergencies, and the reality of an existence that is continually estranged, monitored, evaluated and judged against externally-defined criteria. This reduces the space for developing meaningful,

authentic relationships, and instead imposes practices grounded in a methodology of competition and measurement, designed to reproduce individual, disciplinary and institutional separations.

This systematic strategy for aligning bodies and beings to specific principles *for-value* has an anti-human quality. Marx (1867/2004) highlighted the divisions between individuals in specific working environments, in terms of power and privilege, skills, knowledge and capabilities. Through organisation, different combinations of workers are brought into co-operation, and increasingly see their work governed or taken over by machinery and forms of cybernetic technocracy. The logic of this is ‘the automatic factory’, which devalues labour, such that workers are compelled to increase their specialisation and commodity-producing power in order to remain marketable (ibid.: 545). As functions and activities diversify, simple co-operation becomes more complex, and requires additional organisational development. However, the overproduction of individuals able to engage with work containing generalised levels of skill or knowledge, tends to discipline others in the factory.

Through these processes, exploitation is generalised, transforming the worker ‘into a part of a specialized machine’, with a ‘helpless dependence upon the factory as a whole’ (ibid.: 547). Rather than the worker having autonomy over the labour process, it has autonomy over them. As a result, labour ‘exhausts the nervous system’ because alienating ‘conditions of work employ the worker’ (ibid.: 548). As value production and accumulation comes under stress these conditions are intensified by: extending the working day; stitching technology into the home and the Self; cuts to part-time employment; and, the availability of a reserve army of labour through a gig economy. In fact, it has been argued that the pandemic ‘risks becoming a laboratory for new measures... [including] Opportunities for restructuring labour relations’ in all

fields (WIN 2020: 28).

Workers have a continual need to demonstrate their use or value. Increased specialisation, intensification, and technological and organisational innovation interact methodologically to enable value production from previously unproductive terrains, like HE. This compulsion catalyses both chronic and acute forms of misery beyond the workplace, across a distributed terrain of academic/cognitive capitalism or entrepreneurship. Whilst this reflects shifts in the productive potentialities of global capital (Roggero 2011), it also demonstrates an '(anti)social role... as the academy increasingly operates as a factory producing highly-trained yet docile workers' (Really Open University (ROU) 2011). As a result, functional and emotional separation is maintained between: fractions of academic labour, for instance those who are precarious and those with some form of tenure; academics and professional services staff; and, staff and students. Separation is only momentarily overcome during crises that generalise threats to job security, pensions, working conditions, workload and mental health.

The University operates methodologically through a tempo set by its associations, and with a harmonic motion dictated by value's gravitational pull. It is systematic in organising and arranging singular forms of work in particular, closed ways. The 'mechanical model of the methodological university... [acts] as an active process of enclosing knowledge, where knowledge neither knows itself nor its object' (BAU 2017: 135). The methodological University seeks to reproduce itself through 'a seemingly unshakeable positivism' (ibid.: 136), with a scientific rationality that opposes mutual recognition, dialogue, and material reflexivity. Instead, its common sense reinforces 'the domain of specialist knowledge production, which promotes a formalistic, monological approach to knowledge production mirroring factory production lines, and

embodying the fragmentation and separation inhering in society through the ever-intensifying division of labour' (ibid.).

Within the methodological University, objective study, categorised inside disciplines, is devoid of any explanatory power beyond *either* the metrics that define its value, *or* the commodities that serve as ways of finessing specific, schematic representations of society and nature. It is a space designed around the operationalisation and determination of performance. As such, stochastic, differential games are useful in understanding whether the University contributes to a widening circulation of dynamic inefficiency or whether it enables the control of uncertainty (Leong and Huang 2010). Here, we can analyse the ongoing alienation of labour against material and historical developments in free markets, monopoly finance capital and the virtualisation of wealth. These provide data around perceived economic rationality and indicators of wealth that are disconnected from global rates of profit and productive activity. This disconnection of measures from the quantity of value-producing activity, has widened as the pandemic or long depression enact hysteresis, or permanent structural, corporeal or psychological scarring. Instead, overwork, estrangement, ill-being lead to questions of the rationality of systemic characteristics.

The methodological, structuring reality of market activities become central, especially as they enable different activities to be compared across a global terrain. The market predicates University responses to crises upon their place in a determinate, closed system at *The End of History*, rather than in a stochastic, random and open-ended system that suggests new, historically and materially determinate contexts (Patomäki 2017). University imaginaries tend to operate based upon probabilities and risk in closed environments. They struggle to rationalise exogenous shocks like Covid-19 or the productive/unproductive disconnection noted

above, other than through claims to business-as-usual. Thus, the activities of the University are endogenous, deterministic and transhistorical, because it is impossible to imagine anything other than capitalism. This develops practices based upon the symbolism of value, the search for perfect markets, and institutions capable of the free flow and exchange of commodities, including data. This tends to push the blame for imperfections and uncertainties onto those deemed unproductive. In the University, this means those whose practices are not impactful, entrepreneurial or excellent.

Of course, those very practices are grounded in the methods of closed professions, inside which being a woman, black, queer, disabled is a problem. The power and privilege of those professions, noted by the American Economic Association (AEA 2020), Particles for Justice (2020), and in the noise around #shutdownSTEM in response to Black Lives Matter, demonstrate an acknowledgement of the need for anti-harassment and anti-discrimination work that critiques how academic disciplines construct the world. As Mészáros (2005: 102) notes, this construction rests upon ‘the functioning of “abstractly material” science as a mere means to predetermined, external, alienated ends...’ These ends deny other perspectives and perspectives that are othered, and delegitimise alternative possibilities that question the system and its structures. The desire for the risk-modelling of uncertainties trumps any richer, concrete understandings, and this furthers disciplinary fragmentation.

The University’s methodological realities are enclosed and foreclosed at *The End of History*, as its activities shape a terrain of commodification. In the operationalisation of performance, a new political economy of data acts as a lubricant for the circulation of new commodities and services. As a result of enforced, online working, the University-in-association becomes a laboratory for ‘innovation-financial logics, knowledges, and practices configured

by “rentiership” – or the extraction and capture of value through different modes of ownership and control over resources and assets’ (Birch et al. 2020). This is connected to a material history in which it shapes a social terrain for the commercialisation of research and knowledge production (Hoofd 2017), alongside its militarisation (Murphy 2020).

Methodological control is enabled through a legal and regulatory framework focused upon *both* academic entrepreneurship as intellectual property, *and* extracting and transforming data from personal relationships and environmental processes into assets. Proactive, operational management of the production, circulation and accumulation of such assets furthers the associations between intellectual work and associations of policymakers, finance capital, technology vendors and so on. This situates the methodological University as on-demand, actively producing performance data, whilst processes of commodification remain hidden. Thus, intellectual engagement with social problems lacks possibility beyond the market.

In these performative practices, the methodological University generates and is generative of methodological hopelessness. Yet, at the end of *The End of History*, dialectical thinking situated in open-ended systems offers a deeper critique of the relations and conditions under which University workers labour. This reconnects singular individuals with the material history of the University, rather than reproducing risk-based, empirical denials. As a result, it shows intellectual labour to be a motive, social power that is available to all, despite the attempts to impose control. This questions the University’s existence defined *for-value*, and how this deforms the essence of intellectual work. In this struggle against the University’s determinist methodology, we come up against insecure attachments to disciplines and ways of working, the idea of evidence as arbiter, and the institution’s deductive, ideological

logic. If progressive possibilities have been abandoned at *The End of History*, dialectical struggle might define what lies beyond the University.

The dialectics of the University

The University operates through a method that is focused upon rationality and evidence, framed by pathologies that erupt from the universe of value, but which remain hidden from those who suffer under toxic conditions. These pathologies frame ways of existing and knowing the world that are dynamic in relation to capital, and which, as a result, define particular personas and modes of being and becoming. Through this deductive, rationalised, operating methodology, the institution has become ontologically and epistemologically stuck at *The End of History*. Its conceptualisation of reality, alongside its evidence for that reality, attempts to finesse its existence inside a system of exploitation, expropriation and extraction. It cannot escape the objectification of humans and nature, as material inputs into commodities inside a closed system.

In its symbolism, the University represents an ideation of progress that is Promethean and productive, materialist and divorced from history, and anthropocentric and accelerationist. The idea of the University is reproduced in relation to capital as an external, determining force, which in turn frames a deformed human being. As a result, the subjectivity of those who undertake University work is one-sided, as labour, and is objectified inside commodities. In this, the content of human existence inside the University is practically limited, because the objective compulsion for singular individuals to sell their labour power realises partial or fragmented subjectivities. The demand to compete, overwork, self-harm, and give themselves completely to their work, accelerates fragmentation.

The core domain of fragmentation inside the University, upon which its associations and cultures are predicated, is of disciplines from each other. This builds further separation between humans, and also humans and nature, alongside the divorce of politics/subjectification from economics/objectification. Disciplinary separation, including the fragmentation of teaching, research and scholarship into micro-subjects that can be measured for impact, knowledge exchange and further commodification, maintains bureaucratic control over University labour. The University builds a bureaucracy for measurement, which shapes its existence and actuality in response to external regulatory and funding frameworks. In order to maintain this, structures of reward and recognition emerge in relation to disciplinary separations.

Thus, the University reproduces the social functions of disciplines, in relation to the reproduction of a capitalist totality as a closed system. These disciplines generate value in relation to knowledge production about the material world, but they remain focused upon rationality and evidence, rather than a questioning of the ways in which humans are integrated inside that totality (Marx 1844/1974, 1867/2004). One crucial issue in this enforced fragmentation is the inability of the University to respond meaningfully to global crises, like climate forcing or soil biodiversity loss, precisely because these are treated as environmental problems to be solved, rather than being social problems emerging from an interconnected web of practices and conditions of life. Thus, disciplinary fetishism reinforces the segregation of human life from the environment other than through control of a closed system.

This tends to promote the rule of experts (Mitchell 2002), divorced from the social conditions affecting the lives of those whom they are researching. Disciplinary separations deny the ability of the public to define the questions that overcome those social conditions, and reinforce hierarchies that legitimate

themselves through particular methods, methodologies and evidence-based practices. Disciplinary separation creates a false sense of being-in-itself for tenured intellectual workers, who are able to model their claims for reality based upon a limited disciplinary method, which tends not to be mapped to the lived experience of communities. Reified knowledge cannot deal with the impact and reproduction of the totality of capitalist social relations through those lived realities.

Lukács (1968: 230) was clear that the reintegration of disciplines, such that they are framed historically and materially is crucial in bringing apparently independent systems of thought and practice into a comprehensive whole. One of the issues with reifying particular disciplines and practices is that they deny that their subject-based independence might be transcended. This is not interdisciplinarity, where different disciplinary methods are brought together, or the integration of particular evidential paradigms, rather it is a reintegration that enables the categories of the social world to be defined. This does not then enable the world to be deduced logically from these categories, rather reintegration enables the closed world of capital to be ruptured by human, material practice that is truly scientific, rather than a fetishised version of science. Whilst science offers a methodological approach that discerns essence as the ground of existence through understanding, only in philosophy can essence reconnect to many-sided human being. Science enables an engagement with quantities and qualities, but it cannot move beyond those characteristics, in order to focus upon existence, actuality and being, without philosophy grounded in historical and material practice (Stace 1955).

The denial of this reintegration is a sign of alienation, and the reproduction of alienated subjectivity, precisely because the reproduction of singular disciplines and their particular methods

and measures, is designed to shape a limited activity, *for-value*. This reinforces a limited development of skills, knowledge and capabilities in relation to the production of life. Moreover, it also represents the subordination of isolated disciplines to the totality through a compartmentalised framework, which imposes limits and horizons of possibility for enquiry (Mészáros 2005). For Marx (1863/1968: 119, *emphasis in original*) there was a major issue in this limited horizon, because it indicated a willingness of humans 'to *accommodate* science to a viewpoint which is derived not from science itself (however erroneous it may be) but *from outside, from alien, external interests*.'

As Sheehan (2017) argues, this tends to collapse disciplinary analyses into positivism and postpositivism, which fragments our explanatory power and ability to conceptualise social conditions. In opposition to this fragmentation, a dialectical approach has power because it represents the fluidity of categories, in relation to contradiction and struggle, through which there is a movement of existence, actuality and being, not in relation to the absolute idea of value but as a movement of human becoming. As Sheehan (*ibid.*) notes, from a materialist perspective, this anchors humans back into nature and the environment, in ways that enable a rich engagement with social crises. It does not seek to implement a reductionist, scientific method, in order to finesse social problems and reproduce value production and accumulation. Instead, it seeks to place singular experiences of research, teaching and scholarship, inside particular disciplines or sub-disciplines, and to articulate those against diremptions in the universal imposition of value (Dunayevskaya 1991).

This means reintegrating those disciplinary terrains with the reality of hopelessness in social conditions, collapsing standards of living, immiseration in production, overwork. It also means reintegrating them with the totality of forces and relations of

production at the level of society, such that the questions University workers pose can be posed by intellectual workers more generally, as a mode of reuniting theory and practice (Adorno 1984). This is not the use of disciplines and disciplinary methodologies to reinforce a closed system of capitalist production, for instance as Harouni (2015) argues for mathematics. Engels (1877/1987) was clear that an understanding of the unfolding of society was a collective endeavour, rather than situated inside the rule of experts, and that enables us ‘to know the world as it exists’ as conditional claims, rather than as evidence-based truth.

Reconnecting a particular form of science with philosophy, generates political content, which might then search for a form appropriate to it. Institutional forms deny these modes of content by constricting knowledge inside the demands for disciplinary value production. Instead, what is required is ‘a method of advancing from the known to the unknown’ (ibid.) as an open and richer understanding of the world, with the ability to address the social conditions that have led to intersecting crises. Yet, capital’s autonomy and transhistorical appearance are both generalised and naturalised by the practices of University labourers, as they are compelled to give themselves to knowledge production *for-value*, metrics and measurement, impact and excellence, human capital and productivity. This provides the University’s movement towards actuality, as the relation between its essence as its ground of existence and its appearance.

The former is justified by an allegedly rational, scientific methodology that has been described as metaphysical (Micocci and Di Mario 2017). It is important to note here that the essence as the ground of existence of the University is shaped through its reflections upon how processes like marketisation and finance capital impact its in-itself or conceptualisations of itself. Here, new content, like bond refinancing, a squeeze on student numbers

or research funding predicated upon commercialisation, works to generate new institutional forms adequate to that content. This gives a new appearance that may reflect deep tensions, where restructures or assaults on pensions generate protest. In response, the institution continues to struggle for a form adequate to that content, including using gagging orders or marginalising dissenting voices.

The institution moves to internalise the causes and effects of its appearance in relation to its environments, and gain a more objective understanding of itself, for instance through internationalisation and commercialisation strategies, learning and teaching policies, codes of conduct and institutional visions. This is a movement of actuality that develops a new essence, or sense of in-itself. Whilst the relationship between essence as its ground of existence and its appearance is stunted inside an empiricist, closed system, this is reproduced materially and historically by people, and as such it carries the potential for a many-sided social-utility. Sectoral and institutional management essentialises the methodological University, yet this works to contains a tumultuous, many-sided potentiality. Thus, it is possible to feel hope and hopelessness, solidarity and division, (economic) value and (humane) values at the same time. However, the University cannot generate a form adequate to this content, and therefore compels the movement of a one-sided humanity and a limited being for its workers, defined by their labour.

Entanglement plays out through the relations of causes and effects between the wider environment, the HE system, the institution and the University worker. Here, the individual worker's being (in-itself) is shaped by the relation between quantity and quality, and is determined through generalised measures like impact and excellence. At *The End of History*, the methodological University is unable to move beyond a particular, abstracted, qualitative

conception of the world (based on standardised performance *for-value*), and this controls and distorts the singular, quantitative, lived experiences that forge it. This particular conception has a qualitative relation to value as the universal carrier of meaning, and constructs measured discourses to that end. Through this fixed mode of understanding, a logical appearance emerges for the University that cannot be negated from within, because its essence as its ground of existence is framed by the normalised denial of anti-capitalist alternatives. The determinations of the University, reduced to measures like impact, excellence and satisfaction, distort intellectual work, and ensure that institutions of higher learning appear unable to contribute to the development of a counter-hegemonic system or alternative paths.

As hegemonic measures subsume all singular, lived experiences, particular identities are elevated and reified because of their generative relation to surplus. In this way, a systemic essence is revealed that structures being around a particular colonial and patriarchal universality. Thus, what Moten (2017: 36) calls ‘minoritarian citizenship’ is determined by and against an absolute idea that structures and appropriates surplus through exploitation, expropriation and extraction. In this, the totality of capital, enacted through the universe of value, objectifies all of life, including the materiality of social identities. Again, this is reproduced through entanglement. Queer, feminist, black, disabled, social identities exist as beings-in-themselves, with their own content struggling to find an appropriate form. Their actuality moves in relation to institutional essentialism, which reflects tensions between subject and object, being and other/nothing, and appearance and essence. Here, equality and diversity agendas, alongside calls for equality of opportunity or meritocracy represent institutions working to find an adequate form, whilst maintaining a competitive appearance.

Working through these entanglements demands a radical politics

that can question the totalising nature of capitalist social relations, by demonstrating the validity of subjective, social identities as they are brutalised and objectified inside institutions like universities. These brutalised appearances of humanity are pushed towards self-denial, fugitivity or exodus when placed in relation to the legitimacy of a particular, colonial-settler worldview. Rather than lamenting these alienating existences, they need to be centred as the reality of subjective, human experience. Finding spaces and activities for this is difficult because the University imposes identification with particular characteristics of privilege and status, through which movement of being (for-itself) is determined as human capital. Individuals cannot be qualitatively self-actualised other than negatively, in ways that require cognitive dissonance, dissociation, and false or double consciousness in relation to their alienated labour. Crucially, this is amplified by estrangement between University workers based upon roles, privileges, disciplines, and methodological commitments, and ensures that the dialectical relation between subject and object, appearance and essence, being and becoming, as historical and material processes, remains hidden behind a closed, deductive logic (*Lukács* 1968).

In the methodological University, these entanglements cannot be integrated for a new subjectivity. As workers are objectified as labour power, reality is concealed by knowledge production as the fetishistic form of objectivity. The institution tends to hide behind the idea that only evidence and scientific facts are objective, whilst rendering invisible the qualitative structures of the system that determines subjectivity and objectivity. That humans are subjects and objects of history is concealed, because the methodological University 'is predisposed to harmonise with scientific method, to constitute indeed the social premises of its exactness... [whilst] They are also precisely in *their objective structure the products of a definite historical epoch, namely capitalism*' (*emphasis in original*,

ibid.: 7). Through this weight of quantitative measures, the fragmented subjectivity of the University worker is reproduced, enabling the University to propagate discourses of value-for-money and student-as-consumer, as if there is no alternative to this transhistorical essence.

At *The End of History*, University workers live in an objectified moment, shaped by the appearance of a good life grounded in their labour of love. All the while, the particular, historical and material conditions of production inside the University compel commodified knowledge production for value, as the absolute idea of society. This is to be finessed or made more efficient through alienating social relations. As a result, the University worker can only be fugitive or fatalistic about their institutional existence, or seek exodus, because society's faith in the absolute idea appears immutable. Fugitive or fatalist status is the almost inevitable outcome from a perception that separation and measurement are natural, and describe the limits of our material practice or consciousness (generating a one-sided, being-in-itself). Venturing beyond this hopeless position requires the ability to relate singular, lived experiences and imaginaries to the abstract, totalising reality of capitalism, and to share the alienating, conceptual similarities of those concrete narratives. By taking in these similarities a new essence as ground of existence might be taken in, as a dialectical, negative critique. In starting from the common pain of alienated existences, the potential for unity-through-difference (many-sided being-for-itself) might be revealed.

This is difficult because the methodological University seeks to decompose communities and recycle separations, in order to release surpluses. In this way, its methodological practices maintain capital's social metabolic control, and further condition intellectual work. A different path involves critique of how University imaginaries are shaped through the pathological objectification of its essence as its ground of existence, in relation

to its appearance as a deformed social good. Its actuality is determined as a closed being-in-itself, but it carries both hope and hopelessness, and contains a beautiful potential for humans to become mutual, knowing, beings-for-ourselves. Against the methodological reinforcement of the existence of the University, a dialectical critique pushes beyond any idealism about its universal intention, in order to see how it is socially entangled in ways that negate possibility.

The University and negation

Uncovering how singular, lived experiences are explicitly determined in relation to the institution is one way of moving through negative critique towards negation of this actuality. This does not affirm University work as a labour of love, rather it asks how those experiences are determined in particular ways that *both* enable *and* cut individuals off from subjective being. Such a critique reveals the limits of their becoming (for-itself), such that they might be transcended, as a process of sublation (Hegel 2018). Thus, pushing beyond the ways in which performance management affects singular beings (e.g. a black, queer, woman lecturer) through their relation to particular standards (e.g. professors carrying white, male, performative characteristics), would absorb and transcend determinate qualities of being and their quantitative measures, whilst determining new qualitative characteristics for intellectual life (Moten's (2017) *infinite humanity*).

This shapes a new being-in-itself (consciousness), unfolding towards a new being-for-itself (self-determination), in reciprocal relation of Self to the totality of relations (ibid.). Yet, the methodological University is defended against this, and instead reproduces a self-harming, overworked existence of ill-being, that is labelled a labour of love, whilst that very love is negated

for-value. Such negation is an outcome of the institutional insistence on practices of separation and risk-management, rather than entanglement and uncertainty. It yearns to abolish the void (unproductive activity) and create a pure identity (being-for-itself) grounded in value, where particular, lived experiences are in unity with its transhistorical, naturalised existence. This is a movement of becoming ever more valuable, determined in relation to the market, private property, the division of labour and commodity-exchange.

This validates some beings and invalidates others. For instance, black women working in the University have a determinate individuality, abstracted both as black women and as sellers of labour power, and the particular quantification of this abstracted estrangement (against hegemonic measures) tends to deny their self-determination. This qualitative denial is experienced differentially, but is a common feature of ontological and epistemological closure at *The End of History*. Stace (1955: 375) argues that the actuality of institutions expresses a symbolic universality of purpose that is *both* in opposition to singular, lived experiences, *and* constituted by them. This connects institutional reproduction to the ability to transcend (*aufhebung*) the struggles of fragmented, alienated individuals for subjectivity and against commodification. The abolition of such struggles by the methodological University carries forward a unity where individual subjectivity and objectivity align as human capital.

The one-sided quality of existence, in which labour-power/human capital is presented as the true self of the individual, reflects how the University worker is constantly negated in concrete and ever-changing ways, as institutions search for an ideal reproduction of value (Dunayevskaya 1991). Here, 'the continuous process of becoming, the self-moving, self-active, self-transcending method of absolute negativity' (ibid.: 7), forms capital's social metabolic

control and denies human existence beyond that control. However, there are two issues for the capitalist University: first, recognising the denial of human existence as a one-sided contradiction of life offers ground for self-determination beyond the institution, where one is able to place subject and object, being and nothing, separation and entanglement, hope and hopelessness in opposition (Lenin's (1981) identity of opposites); and second, struggle, dissent, fugitivity and exodus signal the potential limits of institutional integration *for-value*. The possibility is for new, qualitative modes of life.

Carrying forward the ways in which the University's practices negate individual subjectivity, works to transcend that negation as a new, 'absolute movement of becoming' (Marx 1857/1993: 488). Hegel (2010: 33) argued that negation is *both* negative *and* positive. Subject and object, concrete and abstract, singular and universal, do not simply resolve into a nullity, rather they unfold the abolition of particular content and the elevation of new forms. So, the experience of black, queer women in academia has a positive and negative relation to hegemonic, white, male identities. A movement of becoming seeks to abolish the particular measures imposed upon both those bodies, and to transcend them by carrying a more humane, relational essence forward based upon difference. The outcome is not abstract nothingness, rather '*the negation of the determined fact...* is resolved, and is therefore determinate negation; that in the result there is therefore contained in essence that from which the result derives' (Hegel 2010: 33, *emphasis* in original). The negation of what-is occurs through a process of relating one being (in-itself) to the other (in-itself), so that new existences might coalesce (for-itself).

Possibility emerges not simply from acceptance of singular identities, but from new forms of knowing that are phenomenological, material and historical. These enable a

movement of reciprocity that conditions the ground upon which singular/individual essences (as being-in-itself) are based, in order to negate how these essences are reproduced as more-or-less solid, uncertain or precarious (as being-for-itself). This requires that those identities are brought into relation with the political economy of HE and its unfolding, material processes of production. Without this, alienated labour will continue to create hopeless subjects who cannot resist the negation of their subjectivity through value-for-money and the student experience, because they will only be able to contest the symptoms of their distress. This is the crisis of the methodological University, whose workers tend to deny the material, dialectical basis of their history (Lenin 1981), and celebrate the alleged scientific rationality of the present (Sheehan 2017).

For Adorno (1984: 52), '[w]ithout a category, an intellectual is just lost, since [they have] none of the proletarian instincts to carry [them] through on untrodden paths, and therefore, falls into eclecticism.' The instincts of the academic tend to reify their work as an acceptance of the concrete reality of the capital-relation. This demands the categorisation of the self for-value as a universal philosophy (Hegel 2010). At *The End of History*, where a deductive, methodological approach to the knowledge of materialism denies history, this generates a fetishised form of being-for-self that refuses the other, rather than identifying with the other's differences as a singular, human being. As Adorno (ibid.: 113) notes of Hegel, a dialectical movement recognises the other not as a negative to be exploited or abolished, but as a positive dimension of human being. Through struggle, a celebration of difference might enable the free and equal association of producers (Marx 1875/1970).

The methodological University negates this because it projects an appearance of security based upon an imagined future standard of living, or a return to an imagined past. In this, its

essentialism contains limited positive content, divorced from the material, intellectual possibilities of vast swathes of the global population. It cannot see its own hopelessness as a beginning for a new movement of becoming. The methodological tragedy of the hopeless University lies in its enclosure and denial of alternative, material practices unless they align with the essentialism of its organising ideas. Through negation, a categorical, dialectical reworking of knowing becomes possible, but this must take the historical and material actuality of intellectual work as its new logic (Lenin 1981), rather than the hegemonic measurements of the University.

As an antagonistic movement, this requires institutional organising principles to be released from external reference. Rather than working to abolish uncertainty and order reality through metrics, this welcomes the entangled production of a new material history that transcends fixed states of being. A dialectical, scientific method that centres subjects who recognise how they are also objects in the world, enables new social processes, which delegitimise and negate claims to a sovereignty of thought and truthful knowledge (Engels 1877/1987).

Any phenomenology of reintegration and sublation at the end of *The End of History* is grounded in an acknowledgement that humans make the world and that the totality erupts as a result of particular, historical modes of production (Hegel 2018). The capitalist mode determines individuals negatively, as it posits and validates a particular, valuable existence. New paths come from rupturing and transcending the hopelessness of determinate positioning, and reclaiming the content that has been objectified through alienated labour (Cleaver 2017). It is a many-sided movement against essentialising the methodological activities of the University. This is self-knowing as ‘the dialectical movement, this course of self-engendering, advancing, and then returning

into itself' (Hegel 2010: 40 S65), because 'the *being* of something *for a consciousness*, is *knowing*' (Hegel 2010: 55 S82, *emphasis* in original).

Self-knowing is immanent to sensuous human activity that is self-mediating (Marx 1845/1998). It is Hegel's (2018: 256 S443) 'infinite mediating middle' of self-consciousness for-itself. Yet, this is not the world of the hopeless University, which has its origin outside itself, in the market, commodity exchange, the division of labour and private property. Through these mediations, it negates self-knowing as it reproduces capital's social metabolic control over life. As a result, University workers struggle to return to themselves, and are continually negated through alienating, determinate objectification.

Assemblages of separation

Objectification worsens as the relations of production are constantly refined and repurposed through the application of new forces of production. In Chapter 3, we discussed how specific digital technologies, marketed in terms of security and student progression, damage or restrict autonomy, and impose judgements about who and what is legitimate. The interconnection between specific technologies, biometric and behavioural data, the algorithms utilised to collect and analyse data, dominant discourses and cultural norms, reproduces new forms bureaucratic control by codifying, sorting, ranking, identifying and judging. These entities are connected as an assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari 1983), which reproduces the institution through the relationships between the component policies, infrastructures, technologies, flows of information and data, and organisational units. Through feedback on performance and activities, modes of cybernetic control are possible and the institution can restructure or renew itself more dynamically (de-territorialise and re-territorialise itself).

Such assemblages enable an authoritarian turn, in terms of *both* their governance *and* the ways in which they maintain systemic, economistic order in the face of uncertainty. They enable particular types of content, like commercialisation or specific vocational courses, to be valued differentially. However, they are disciplinary in that they quantify human lives and experiences, construct particular identities based on dominant norms, and then enforce the internalisation of that quantification/construction (Stark 2019). In this internalisation, the particular quality of measurement that they enable quantifies identities against imposed criteria, and this generates a negative being-in-itself. Hegemonic, bureaucratic ecosystems appear to make possible constant judgement about performance, such that the threat of not measuring-up is always present. Not measuring-up places the self in relation to nothingness, as a void that is absolute, such that self-determination is absolutely impossible. For those who measure-up, there is an identity with nothingness that enables limited actuation of their own being.

This is a limited self-actuation, or being-for-itself, because institutional assemblages that codify, measure, stratify and report learning outcomes, public engagement, impact, commercialisation, and so on, continually negate identities unless they generate surplus. Moreover, they do so across a comparable, international terrain. The consciousness of University workers lacks purpose beyond value, and as a result their being is contingent on mediations that generate technologically-reinforced separations. Assemblages receive frequent feedback in relation to institutional governance and performance, sectoral financial regulation, reports from consultancies and public sector regulatory bodies, educational technology corporations, credit ratings agencies, and so on. This reproduces competition within disciplinary and service-led silos, against which excellence and impact can be judged, and autonomy conditioned.

Control over behaviour is central to ensuring that the practices of the University are valuable. Thus, sets of performative norms, internalised for technocratic and algorithmic self-exploitation, are increasingly framed against ideas of learning science. These normalise conceptions of how people learn, in order to fund big-bet innovations, and rapid prototyping and advancement of solutions (Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI) 2020). Such ideas have a material history, based in the role of philanthrocapitalists, transnational lobbyists, and educational consultancies, in enabling local systems and sectors to adopt and scale-up innovations focused upon student outcomes and efficacy (World Bank Group 2020).

There are institutional nuances in this framing of assemblages. Brankovic (2018) identifies how organisational status is constructed using *categories*, *intermediaries* and *affiliations*, which *impact differentially* across universities of different intellectual, social and financial capital, and that affect behaviour accordingly. Here, there is an immanence between institutional relations of production and the forces that recompose the capital-relation inside them. Morrissey (2015) analyses regimes of performance and normalisation through competitive networks inflected by rankings, benchmarking and productivity. Cantwell et al. (2020) have identified how technocratic governance through rankings generates institutional and disciplinary inequalities, alongside vertical stratification, which accelerates competition over status.

Modes of ranking, benchmarking and productivity, infused with categories, intermediaries and affiliations, are immanent to technological and data-driven assemblages pivoting around value. These assemblages generate data as a motive force for flows of value and surpluses through the associations of capitals that give the University its form. During the pandemic, this shaped the refusal by governments to give institutional bailouts, unless they were conditional on restructuring regimes, because that would damage

the ordered liberties of technocratic market governance. This reflects Marx's (1867/2004: 617) view that capital seeks assemblages of machinery and organisation for the purpose of 'continually transforming not only the technical basis of production but also the functions of the worker and the social combinations of the labour process.'

Continual transformation imposes relations of production that are toxic to many University workers. The composition of the class of such workers is too fragmented *either* to act homogenously for-itself, *or* collectively to confront their conditions of production. Constantly shifting, determinate conditions reshape how academic labour functions, for instance through the interconnections between: privately-owned, infrastructural and sectoral platforms; intelligent information networks that are interoperable and associational; always-on monitoring, analysis and prediction of locations, behaviours and actions; and, cloud-based technical infrastructures, including artificial intelligence. As Williamson (2020c) notes, this works to reimagine HE through its actors' integration with a global, commercial ecosystem. Universities, recomposed through assemblages of public policy and privatised technological and performance data, normalise separation and the controlled access to resources and status, such that surveillance is accepted even if not deemed acceptable.

Workers actively contribute to this, by giving free labour to national ranking, audit and peer review activities. Such data-rich practices are immanent to the rollout of managerialism, because they enable direct, global comparisons. In relation to research, Elsevier's SciVal tool compares: specific outputs; field-weighted citation impact; outputs in relation to citation percentiles; publications in top journal percentiles; outputs with impactful international collaborations; and academic-corporate collaborations. Such tools shape the being of the intellectual worker,

and in providing analyses by year, discipline, type of output, and individual researcher, they offer new ways of codifying, separating, assessing and sorting. As a result, decontextualised judgements about activities enables the reproduction of hierarchies and power inside the University.

Here, in the assemblage, ratings as proxies for prestige focus academic work on the power of citation, generating performance data that enables associations of capital to colonise an established terrain, for instance through rents for new data and research management services. Finance capital acts to smooth the flow of technological innovation and acceleration between different spheres of production. Thus, in the publishing sector and in intellectual work, connections develop through different phases of engagement, apparently ‘isolated by the social division of labour, in such a way that each of them produces an independent commodity’, enable ‘a revolution in the general conditions of the social process of production’, i.e. in the means of academic publishing and related services (Marx 1867/2004: 505-06).

National and international rankings build commitment to metric-driven identities, processes, cultures and infrastructures, even whilst they impose punishing monitoring practices that commit individuals to becoming self-exploiting, and exploiting of their communities. This accelerates: first, academic estrangement from societal transformation other than that narrowly-defined as impact, public engagement and evidence-based policy (Morrish and Sauntson 2019); and second, stratification and objectification because career development is framed around measures of performance in technocratic assemblages that delegitimise the practices and identities of particular groups of racialised staff and students (Kubota 2019).

As a result, the technologies and technological assemblages or ecosystems of the institution reproduce hopelessness, because they

tend to enforce ways of behaving that deny improvisation or self-expression as a mode of autonomy, unless they can be measured. This is particularly acute since the pandemic generalised online working from home, and increased the tendency for overwork, burnout and cynicism. Moreover, the assemblages that mediate University work also deny the trauma of the pandemic, or the ability to process that trauma individually and collectively. Instead, the pain of the world is forgotten beyond the struggle to maintain position through demands, measures and judgements about individual and disciplinary performance.

In this process, hope is reduced to a matter of technocratic policy or wish-fulfilment (Harney and Moten 2013), in the gift of those who watch the assemblage and use it to maintain flows of value through associations of capitals. The site of alienation is seen to lie in unfair, everyday practices that need to be finessed or cancelled, rather than in labour itself. Moreover, the focus upon discourses of the student experience and value-for-money enables managers to weaponise the appearance of differences between groups of workers (students, professional services and academics). It hides their points of solidarity by maintaining that the ground of their existence is different, rather than containing the same categorical content.

In this way, the University can widen its circuits of quantification and objectification, and co-opt allegedly radical practices by enforcing modes of scholarship and professionalism for surpluses. This includes the ways in which governments and corporates have predicated open research, open data and open scholarship upon the ability to commodify and circulate new services, for instance around: student loan repayments, higher qualifications, and attainment data; educational facilities; and capacity-building grounded in economic effectiveness through the (de) regulation of AI. Here, openness in research is conditioned against knowledge

exchange, transfer and commercialisation, and hence the intellectual worker who wishes to be open has to balance modes of accountability and responsibility, through which their practices generate a terrain of new codes, stratifications and hierarchies.

The fusion of technology, data and academic practices has been reinterpreted as scalable co-operation. Yet, assemblages enable institutions to be technologically and organisationally reimagined, predicated upon the estrangement and unequal integration of certain bodies, depending upon their markers of identity, or social responsibilities. Feedback through the assemblage situates individuals through their practices and behaviours against the division of labour, and also worsens the conditions of that labour, through intensification and overwork. As labour is increasingly based upon divisions and separations, platform assemblages accelerate fragmentation, proletarianisation and worsening conditions (Marx and Engels 1846/1998).

The essence of these processes is hidden from University workers. What becomes clear is the impossibility within capitalist social relations for technologies to become tools of liberation, as a move towards the Commons and away from organisational toxicity. This would require a scientific imagination that stood against exploitation, expropriation and extraction (Bhattacharyya 2018), and it would require those technologies to be disentangled from the authoritarian assemblages inside which they are deployed. As the platform University is assembled as an innovation hub for updating capital's production process and accumulation problems, it becomes degenerative rather than regenerative. This is given impetus by the compulsion to engage in practices of competition, which normalises overwork, speed-up and restructuring. Through assemblages for separation, uncertainty and vulnerability are generalised.

Socially-necessary labour time

A critical innovation lies in the ongoing control and repurposing of the time for intellectual activity. The labour time of the University is a crucial moment of methodological, cybernetic control, and the tempo of the academic *peloton* is set by: reductions in available time, for instance in terms of assessment; the fragmentation of available time, for instance in the unbundling of the curriculum or the denial of tenure for certain people; and the acceleration of available time, for instance in accelerated degrees or demands for knowledge transfer and the circulation of academic commodities. Temporal control is a central strategy for overcoming the political composition of labour, and capital constantly innovates its technical composition to enable fluidity and movement.

Here there is a connection to the loss of control of clock-time at *The End of History* by those who labour. In a transhistorical analysis of the circuits and cycles of capitalism, there is no material history to be made, and existence is reduced to the institutional repurposing of time for the management of events alongside the risk-based reduction of uncertainty. In this, the University strives to make its autonomy over labour time as painless as possible for itself, by annihilating the labour upon which it functions depend, through technological intensification, innovation and entrepreneurship. Thus, through the desire to accelerate the production and circulation of academic commodities, it moves towards new workload models, accelerated degrees and forms of accreditation, online proctoring and automation assessment, and so on. At *The End of History*, the control of time enables the competitive control of surplus.

As noted in Chapter 2, time, in the form of workloads and the delivery of teaching and research commodities, or the circulation of administrative commodities in the form of grades, attendance data, new technological infrastructures, and so on, appears to be

a central terrain of struggle. Yet, the reality is that the true essence of time, in the form that is socially necessary for the production of commodities and services, appears hidden from those who are overworked and ill. University workers are confronted by units of time that are allegedly objective and accountable, in relation to concrete practices. This ensures that institutions are able to manage psychological failings in relation to time through resilience, mindfulness, compartmentalisation of teaching and research, agile project management, and so on.

The concrete time of the institution forces a remoulding of the individual, grounded in socially necessary labour time, which conditions the activity of a worker. More-skilled workers conditioned by and actualising more effective assemblages of techniques, technologies, data, policies and organisational development, reduce the average time for an activity across a social terrain and increase productivity. In HE, the role of technological and organisational innovation, alongside new market/financial incentives and the maintenance of divisions between different workers, focus upon intensification and a reduction in socially necessary labour time, even if the first impulse is to lengthen the working day. Here, it is important to return to questions that: tie University labour to performance management; ground being the intensification of working conditions; and, are predicated upon acceleration on a global scale. These amplify the loss of autonomy for University workers, forced to compete, in order to counteract the threat of precarity, obsolescence and abandonment. The loss of autonomy mirrors the institutional desire for relative surplus-value, and the result is practices of super-exploitation, and ongoing restructuring of institutions and lives.

In spite of critiques of the accelerated university, or the need for slow forms of academia, the reality of time in the University is hidden from its workers. As an abstract representation of the

relationship between the forces and relations of production, it is too difficult to imagine time beyond workload or units allocated to specific tasks. As a result, a new, universal appreciation of life, grounded in alternative, material histories, is too difficult to contemplate. In hiding the essence of the compulsion to speed-up and overwork, capital negates humanity, through its determinist, quantitative content, where 'Time is everything, [humans] nothing, at most time's carcass. Quality no longer matters. Quantity alone provide everything; hour for hour; day for day' (Marx 1867/2004: 127).

The methodological University controls time, as the 'historically specific, abstract form of social domination intrinsic to capitalism's fundamental forms of social mediation' (Postone 2009: 41). Once again, those who have access to time, and who can speed-up time, represented by Professors as the most value-able of identities, are pre-eminent. Thus, the interconnection of time with discourses of productivity, and the fetishisation of particular forms of production, further 'self-objectification [and the] transformation of human function into commodity' (Marx 1867/2004: 59). As Cleaver (2017: 92) argues, this damages freedom as institutions seek to colonise the lifeworld of the University worker such that 'less and less time and energy is available for unrelated activities' that cannot be commodified.

This colonisation of the lifeworld is a deliberate social practice, designed to maintain the ideological and material conditions of domination, through logics of subsumption that constrain the risk to value-production and circulation (Hall and Bowles 2016). Institutions are tied into the reproduction of these conditions, through their own debt and bond-driven practices, and by shackling students to them through the spectre of debt. Hence, the annihilation of individual autonomy through institutional risk-governance, 'is exercised within an open space and an unlimited

time, that is, space and time of life itself' (Lazzarato 2015: 69). This is normalised precisely because the hopeless University is itself subsumed and re-engineered by an existential belief that we are at *The End of History*, where making time for life beyond value is impossible.

The only way to manage life is by determining modes of being in relation to concrete quantities of time for activities, which in turn hide how that time is measured abstractly. This means that the University worker's being is determined in terms of whether it is socially necessary for the production of value. Even worse, the actual concrete activity, as reproduction research, for new anti-retroviral therapies, in green logistics, archaeological techniques, music teaching, or whatever, is irrelevant beyond its relation to value defined as socially necessary. Often, this is stated as value-for-money, but this hides the reality that activity is conditioned by the ability to exchange a commodity, based on the labour time embedded in it, mediated in the market. It is the surplus-generating value and the time it takes to release this that matters.

In this way, the University is a mechanism for a wider foreclosing on the future. Reproduced through new, cybernetic assemblages of flows of labour, finance and technology (Deleuze and Guattari 1983), this ensures the conversion of the institution into a method for extracting 'machinic surplus value', with workers exploited through 'machinic subjection' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 458). Technologies and techniques are designed to accelerate production, to remove labour-related barriers, and to destroy the friction of circulation time. The skills, knowledge and capabilities required to function inside the institution are reproduced more quickly and cheaply, and can be generalised, and as a result this accelerates the relationship between teaching and research, and their practical, capitalist exploitation. Finance capital uses student debt, in order to recruit new workers into this process, which increases supply

and competition.

The University reproduces the determination of existences and beings by socially necessary labour time and value (Marx 1894/1991), in managing global access to resources like research outputs and teaching. Thus, it can connect accelerated development of new commodities available just-in-time in a transnational market, to the expropriation of resources from communities made marginal, who were forced into debt to compete. The temporality of these lives is then expropriated or extracted for surpluses that generally flow to the financial centres of the global North (Bhattacharyya 2018).

The control of time, and for what and whom it is regulated, maintains hegemony. This also goes for the disciplinary gatekeeping of time, which amplifies the alienation implicit in the work of the University. Yusoff (2018: 61) argues this for geological time, as an allegedly scientific rationality based upon a specific subjectivity. Hegemonic interpretations demonstrate the ‘centrality of race to the production of humanity in the Anthropocene [that] requires a reconfiguration of the subject at the centre of the white liberal ethical accounts and an acknowledgement of the role of race in the production of global spaces that constitute the Anthropocene.’ Particular identities and bodies get to define the domination of geological time, just as they do clock time and abstract time. The result is the acceleration of the exploitation, expropriation and extraction of the lives of others and of nature.

The University-in-itself, for-value

The methodological University enforces a specific social constitution of labour with a dynamic composition, mode of activity and organisation. Against processes that normalise a dominant mode of production, reinforced through the intensification of socially necessary labour time, and governed

through techniques and technologies of separation, individual and collective agency demonstrate a range of impossibilities. These depend upon identities and processes of marginalisation. It may well be that stories might act as a vector for consciousness building, and something to organise around, but capital is used to morphing its forces and relations of production, and thereby compelling its institutions to act in themselves and for-value.

The University-in-itself works to stymie class composition, and through class struggle to instantiate technocratic control of the labour process based around surplus everything. As such, the methodological realities of the University squeeze out all time and space for a working out of the politics of liberation, except, potentially, inside the classroom. The classroom is the only space where, momentarily, intellectual workers might remove the chains of their alienation through acts of opening-out or communing. It is the only space where they might work against mediated consumption. Yet the logic of the University seeks to squeeze this through its methodological control, as the most concentrated expression of its practices at *The End of History*. Unable to question this methodological logic, intellectual workers cannot present alternatives beyond the struggle for labour conditions (Adorno 1984).

As it makes concrete a particular transhistorical existence, the methodological University is caught between public and private good. Its very being, pivoting around the law of value, ensures that the University-in-itself collapses the potential for subjectivity around processes for objectification and commodification. Thus, screams against sexual violence and harassment on campus, the place of cops on campus, and racial violence in relation to attainment, promotions and decolonising, lose their subjective power at the level of the institution, precisely because the University-in-itself has to protect its productive capacity and its

ability to generate surpluses. The University is unable to support movements of liberation that realise 'Being with oneself in another', or the identity of subject with object, and being with nothing, as modes of self-negation and transcendence (Hegel 2018: 799). In protecting its identity, the University-in-itself cannot work for true equality that respects the mutuality of differences, because its logic requires that all identities measure-up through abstractions.

This is enabled by validating particular forms of content, identified through particular modes of hegemonic performance, and rejecting others. Yet, the University-in-itself, works to deny that this is the case, and fears becoming embroiled in culture wars, for instance around the actuality of life described by critical race theory. Instead, it works for objectivity, and to predicate academic freedom as an anti-identity project, with no angle of vision beyond colonial patriarchy (Hull 1982: 193). For instance, it demands to know the benefits and blueprint of the decolonised University, rather than accepting a process of decoloniality. In this way, it sees its work as an intellectual exercise, rather than a social transformation. Thus, the University in the global North cannot see, let alone strive for, a liberated, subaltern meaning grounded in revolutionary thought. Contestation is an academic game, rather than a matter of life-and-death.

University denials also inflect action on climate forcing. Whilst the constitution of the IPCC Working Groups and the intellectual content of their special and assessment reports (IPCC 2018) are generated from within HE institutions, only a limited number of institutions make nods to carbon neutrality or disinvestment from fossil fuels. Elsewhere, there is limited traction for carbon-neutral conference models or international engagement, and instead institutions utilise the pandemic to reconsider costs for professional development and dissemination with emissions as a secondary gain. The University focuses upon flows of energy in

relation to costs, to the exclusion of energy investment in fixed assets. Educational institutions and their strategies pivot around green growth, and sustainable development, which deny any useful engagement with alternative possibilities for energy use in determining practices. These might include those which pivot around *vivir bien* in Bolivia (Lopes Cardozo 2011), or through indigenous landless movements in Brazil like the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST)* (Canaan 2017).

Instead, at *The End of History*, the University is wedded to ecological modernisation, which promotes the diffusion of efficient technologies, whilst ignoring the Jevons Paradox. It hopes for sustainable growth as a mode of reformism, and pivots its practices around problem-solving integrated, systems-based solutions to crises, with technological innovation directed at maintaining societal modernisation through sustainable development. In particular, universities in the global North, and especially in G20 countries, are deeply implicated in the reproduction of emissions, carbon, energy use, resource use, cheap labour, cheap debt, with few, long-term, net zero carbon strategies or commitments to decarbonising. In its focus upon material efficiency, the University-in-itself has no political economy beyond these limits, which is precisely why it is disciplined inside the universe of value, in order to maintain capital's social metabolic control (Foster 2017). As such, it is unable to contribute to the dismantling of regimes of accumulation, and instead remains aligned with the creative destruction of the planet through a commitment to the capitalist mode of production.

The hopeless University maintains a methodological commitment to sustainable development, which is a 'utopian folly' (Dale et al. 2016: 10). Through pensions, reliance on particular forms of infrastructure, the development of commercialisation and internationalisation, and the overreliance

upon the mobility of (human) capital, the University is wedded to fossil fuel corporations (Fletcher and Rammelt 2017). Even where renewables are discussed, these do not: displace fossil fuel production of infrastructure; decelerate energy-related emissions; ensure energy security; or reduce environmental degradation and land exploitation. Moreover, within institutions, responses are generally disciplinary, such that political scientists focus upon lobbying, engineers upon productive infrastructure and process, economists upon green supply chains, and so on.

In such disciplinary, associational institutional structures, operationalised through assemblages of separation, it feels impossible to recover a sense of being-for-itself within a mutual, relational ecosystem. The methodologies of the institution simply reproduce and advance capital's power and privilege. As a result, rather than being emancipated, University work is increasingly emaciated as it is estranged from alternative, material histories. As such emaciated work is intensified during the pandemic, in order to maintain flows of capital, it is unable to imagine a shortening of the working day, a reduction in workloads, and the use of technology to annihilate necessary labour. This means that university workers cannot 'create the essential foundations for further struggles' (Saito 2017: 129). With no safe ground inside themselves from which to generate a class of workers-in-themselves, let alone for-themselves, the methodologies of the University make it impossible to connect to 'protests against the brutal exploitation of the free forces of nature, including pollution, acidification, desertification, and exhaustion' (ibid.).

Such alienation and separation deny the possibility for 'a sustainable metabolic interaction between humans and nature' (ibid.: 161), and further reinforce anthropological, decolonial disconnections rather than building reparative practices (Pimblott 2019). The desperate search for relative surplus value intensifies

production, and erupts from the foundation of absolute surplus value, predicated upon ongoing internationalisation and commercialisation strategies, which encourage commodity dumping in the global South and the extraction of resources for the global North. Moreover, it relies upon transhistorical discourses, which deny an alternative species-being for humanity, and which enunciate capitalist production as self-evident and natural.

Thus, the University, operating pathologically and methodologically at *The End of History*, cannot reintegrate disciplines, humans with nature, subjects and objects, or yearning and hopelessness. It has no method or strategy for transcending these binaries, in order that a new human essence or being-in-itself, might emerge. Instead, it works to mediate and transform human material practices in and on the world for-value. There is no absolute movement of becoming, as the development of the richness of human nature as an end in itself, and no coherent, anti-methodological practice. Instead there are reactive struggles, in relation to workload, the attrition on pensions, and the assault on labour rights.

There is no sense of whether intellectual workers might: develop parallel institutions as a mode of transition; work to communise the institution from within; develop struggles grounded in fugitive planning; or enact exodus. Too often, there is a collapse into the idealism of the co-operative University, or nostalgia for the public university. Is it possible to use these as 'an accumulation of small changes, providing much-needed hope against a feeling of powerlessness' (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006: 738)? Is it possible to refuse methodological imposition, and to elevate stories that challenge ideas of social and class composition?

In accepting that the imaginaries of the methodological University are not rational, it becomes possible to focus upon the different flavours of life, as a revolt against unfreedom (Holloway

2016). This is the movement away from determined identity, which in turn makes non-identity central as a dialectical homecoming. It is a recognition that self-determination is hearing one's being speak for-itself, as an act of liberation (Dunayevskaya 1991). Transcending abstract determination is a horizon of possibility erupting from the classroom, through revolutionary intellectual practices that sublate hopelessness, and carry it forward towards a new being.

A Movement of the Heart

Universities, their structures, cultures and practices, entangled with the abstract imaginaries of capitalist social relations, are reproduced against an entropic tendency that denies the kinds of security that were hoped for by many of its workers. There appears to be limited secure ground inside institutions that cultivate pathological and methodological behaviours. This argument deliberately leaves hope aside, because it is entangled with fear and anxiety about the future, and this removes the possibility for remaining in the present in ways that enable concrete reimagining. Uncritical hope leaves us tied to our projections into the future, and this denies us agency, precisely because it acts to disassociate us from current suffering.

Rather than focusing on hope, concrete activity grounded in present hopelessness might engender the courage and faith required to move beyond fidelity to institutions that continue to brutalise. Instead of hope placed in equality and diversity strategies, and meritocratic forms of performance, it is important to recognise that the ground of the capitalist institution is to reproduce the universe of value, and to make everyday life impermanent. This is the starting point, through which it is possible to recognise an

awakening through despair, and to give up our projection of hopes for salvation onto institutions and their leaders. Inside a system predicated upon competition, it becomes impossible for such salvation to have any ground other than that vested in particular forms of ego.

The institution, driven by hope and fear, enshrines the idea that there is a void or a deficit inside its labourers, which can be offset through productivity, entrepreneurship or human capital development. This reinforces the treadmill of competition, because the future reproduction of the system is everything, and the present moment nothing. Our University work is shackled to this future reproductive activity, and as a result, intellectual activity appears to be nothing without ongoing exceptionalism. Our intellectual being, knowing and doing are shackled to *both* the hope of tenure, performance bonuses, decolonisation, equality or whatever, *and* the fear of academic death.

Yet, hope provides some with individual and collective inspiration, and has been connected to anger that enables new visions (Solnit 2016). Elsewhere the focus has been defining space-times where hopes might converge as modes of venturing beyond the present, to enable dreaming or dreamscapes (Gunn 1987). For others, there is a perception that critique without hope descends into cynicism (Popova 2020), and that a fusion of criticality and hope offers opportunities to prepare the ground for alternatives. Yet, too often it is this very ground that is at issue, precisely because it is either naïve in its lack of a systemic critique, or it attempts to pre-empt, anticipate or prefigure a new system that can conquer uncertainty (Anderson 2010). This is the root of much systems thinking, futures-oriented research, or risk-based, scenario-planning. An anticipatory, hoped-for future orientation must emerge from the present, systemic, contradictory and dialectical realities of life.

The existence of the University is defined through contradiction.

It makes us feel hopeful whilst its practices engender hopelessness. Its legacy and associations make intellectual work feel possible, whilst its cultures kettle its practices. Its communal possibilities feel humane, whilst the forms they take are increasingly marketised. Struggles against rankings or subsumption, are predicated upon reimagining a more hopeful, future University that better serves the needs of society. They tend not to have a horizon beyond capitalism, and as a result have a limited explanatory and analytical range for individual and collective experiences of melancholia, anxiety and grief. They do not enable an understanding of how mourning the hopelessness of the University-as-is might enable a renewed energy and agency beyond the capitalist institution and its hierarchies, privileges, pathologies and methodologies.

At the end of *The End of History*, hopelessness centres the concrete and abstract ways in which capitalism and its institutions continue to construct the world and dominate nature. Hoping that its entanglements might be overcome through evidence-based logic denies the reality that the University is a space for: scholarship that denies self-autonomy; community that denies true equality; and global conversations that reproduce coloniality, and refuse alternative ways of knowing the world. The University acts, not for society, but for capital as the automatic subject that mediates our existence and denies our being. Instead, what is required is an ability to organise intellectual life in society, rather than University workers helping to organise life for society. This must emerge from an understanding of the forms, pathologies and methodologies that the University represents, in order to give up on its possible redemption. It means grieving its loss in as full a way as possible, so that: first, its skills, knowledge and capabilities might be liberated into society; and second, new organising and governing principles might be enacted beyond its walls.

In the present conjuncture of crises, this feels impossible,

because fear denies solidarity at the level of society, and intellectual work remains divorced from a generative politics of collective organisation. There is limited space to turn the everyday, suffocating reality of overwork, the denial of social reproduction, and ecological destruction, into new political trajectories that break our current existences. Rather than identifying how capitalist institutions use crises of finance, bodies and nature to reproduce inequalities and injustices, the focus remains upon future hopes, decent work and better labour conditions. These are not transitional demands, rather the horizon of struggle for many.

For Marx (1852), the struggle must aim at transforming the present, such that revolutionary practice ‘cannot take its poetry from the past’, and must focus upon its own path that strips away ‘all superstition about the past.’ The path of such practice must generate its own content, and concentrate its point of departure from an understanding of how its situation, relations and conditions are made hopeless, even by the co-option of past struggles. Thus, we ask whether it is possible to build a rank-and-file network capable of becoming for-itself, rather than fractions of the labour force acting in-themselves as workers. Otherwise, the energy of the movement is dissipated. Equally, how do we stitch that existence for-itself into labour’s intersections with sexuality, gender, race and so on, with implications for ecology and social welfare?

These possibilities matter because the University plots a miserable course, in which humans made precarious are sacrificed, and this is amplified by a disorganised workers movement in sectors and across society. Instead of compartmentalised, separated, evidenced-based practices of knowledge production, working for a new way of knowing the world that enables life in the next moment demands a new practice of philosophy. This is the ability to recognise one’s being in the present, as it is mediated

and abstracted, and to struggle against that immediately, in order to work constantly for the abolition of ego and identity. It is a revolutionary struggle *against* the roles we take on in the present as insurance against future death, and it is also a struggle *for* living now.

This ongoing work is materially and historically-concrete, and it is against its contents and forms, as it drives to overcome its estrangement. *Both* work *and* the structures, cultures and practices of the University, are the sites of struggle. Focusing upon liberating egos or identities as a separate object, inside a more equitable, liberal or fraternal institution, merely reproduces division and separation. Instead, the movement must be for everyday ways of knowing, doing and being in the world, and a richer means of knowing humanity and its ecosystems. This means composting the disintegration of our own ways of knowing, doing and being, and as a result standing against the University's desire for our ongoing commodification. Sitting with hopelessness is accepting the return of politics to our everyday existence as continual, class struggle and pedagogical work at *The End of History* (Tronti 2019).

A dialectical movement

A fundamental starting point is to ask how, individually and collectively, we use our engagement in the University to step away from culturally-acceptable, self-harming activities and the reproduction of exploitation, in order to heal ourselves. Rather than hoping for a broadening of access to privilege, status and tenure, the demand is for a subversive critique of the present state of the University as a scream of despair. This scream reveals the ways in which intellectual labour is used for-value rather than to engage with global emergencies, and the ways in which the University reinforces waste on a global terrain. In revealing these failings, and in enabling despair to be examined, a movement

for restorative justice supports the path of those made marginal, against their continuing reproduction in relation to exploitation and expropriation. This also works to bringing balance back to academic engagement with society and the natural world in ways that refuse extraction.

The path of justice centres indignant critiques and new ways of seeing. As Cleaver (2017: 206) argues, hope is no plan, and struggles that focus upon ‘a promise and a hope’, with ‘no analysis of what strength we do have’, leave us unable to build in the present. For Cleaver (*ibid.*), rupturing established structures, cultures and practices occurs when present activity does not point to or enable capital’s future. This is a constant movement for autonomous activity, seen in student rent strikes during the Covid-19 pandemic, strike debt movements during the long depression, and in struggles for black and indigenous lives.

Capital’s opposition limits the future horizon of struggle through co-option, exhaustion and, fear. Through the University, its tactics include: limiting the political content of the curriculum and focuses upon future earnings; imposing precarity and performativity through surveillance and monitoring; and moving funding for institutions and students towards debt and loans. A movement against such a hopeless confluence of factors, taking absolute negativity as its point of departure, critiques the institutions that centre capital at the expense of humans and their worlds. This works to relate the singular experiences of the black woman unable to gain promotion, the student continually subject to stop-and-frisk, the white professor committed to overwork at the expense of his friends and family, the graduate student exhausted through the search for precarious work, the worker who self-censors online, to the particular measure of what it means to work in the University. It then relates those singularities to their shared experiences as alienated labour at the level of society, in

order to articulate how capital organises life through abstraction and estrangement.

The idea is to reveal the quantity of alienated identities and intersections, and to demonstrate a new qualitative unity-through-difference that moves towards refusal ‘at a higher level [that is] active and collective’ (Tronti 2019: 274). This connects the struggles of the intellectual worker to those in wider society, so as to deepen their roots. Moreover, it illuminates how capital’s demand for alienated labour is the nothing that we fear we will become unless we work more productively, and this also reveals how our present, lived moments become opaque and unconscious (Bloch 1996). Illumination enables a movement of struggle against permanent objectification at *The End of History*. The point is to work against totalitarian limits and to build towards ‘a realm of freedom which is not that of the present [but which] represents a new quality of life’ (Marcuse 1969b). Such a quality is predicated upon negating a system that has corrupted our humanity for-value, and that denies alternative, poetic conceptions and constructions of a ‘new sensibility of life’ (ibid.). This is a radical change in consciousness, which forms a loop that can never be closed, precisely because subjectivity is continually becoming through sensuous, material practice.

Association is central to this process where it is free, rather than imposed through abstractions like the division of labour (Dunayevskaya 1991). This requires a level of consciousness produced inside the mode of production, which also stands against it. For Dunayevskaya (ibid.) absolute negativity, or *Aufhebung*, is a process of transcendence and conservation, which negates that which itself negates our own existence, actuality and being. Against the capitalist University, this is an unfolding of the ways of knowing the world enacted through that institution, alongside an understanding of how its cultures and practices have been

made socially-useful for-value. It accepts that individuals have skills, knowledge and capabilities developed inside the University, but knows that these are bastardised for particular, positional and marketable ends, grounded in ideas of private property.

Instead, the work of transcendence is to re-establish those individual ways of knowing the world as a direct form of production, rather than as mediated by the job market, or the compulsion to develop human capital for-value. Moreover, this work seeks to develop spaces and places for learning, like schools and universities, that can be governed directly in society, rather than as mediated through government regulation, or legislation pertaining to companies and charities. It abolishes and transcends the privatisation of individual and institutional activity, and returns that activity to the individual and their communities. The focus is co-operation and shared ownership of the means of production.

As Marx (1867/2004: 930) notes, private property rests on socialised production and the social power of labour, and this generates the possibility for recovering it as social property. It is both conserved as a useful object and transformed as social. Marx (*ibid.*: 929) highlights the dialectical importance of this as ‘the negation of the negation. It does not re-establish private property, but it does indeed establish individual property on the basis of the acquisitions of the capitalist era: namely co-operation and the possession in common of the land and of the means of production produced by labour.’ The University, as an associated node in capitalist production, is an important space for understanding how expropriators may be expropriated, as the negation of that which negates human potentiality, through the return to social ownership of our social wealth. Reimagining such spaces and places for free, communal association, where necessary, social work can be shared out or organised technologically, enables a

widened realm of freedom (Marx 1875/1970).

Understanding how the capitalist mode of production has reimagined work and repurposed it through processes of subsumption, the combination of labour with science and technology, and social co-operation, reveals *both* the potential wealth of human knowing, doing and being, *and* how that potentiality is exploited, expropriated and extracted. For any reawakening to negate that which negates us, it must reconnect the hopelessness of the human condition under capitalist social relations, to the material history of human agency and its limits in the world (Engels 1877/1987). This work recognises the return of history as the development of practices aimed at transcending and conserving that which negates our beings.

That which negates us is not an abstract, pure void, negativity or other. It might be regarded as ‘a *determinate* nothing [that] has a *content*’ (Hegel 2018: 53 S79, *emphasis* in original). If the University is regarded ‘as *determinate* negation’ (ibid., *emphasis* in original), it is possible to work for new forms, cultures and practices. Through negation as a dialectical, conscious movement, transition situated upon knowing oneself as a subject/object in the world, rather than as human capital, becomes possible. Self-knowing is the unfolding of praxis through the unity of reflection with action or reaction, as a movement of reflecting oneself into one’s own essence as a continual, direct process, rather than one mediated in relation to privilege and status (ibid.: 158 S270, 185 S319).

Here, we work to overcome the relationship between singular individuals, related to particular modes of performance and performing through co-operation in social production, and framed by a universal conception of what it is to be a productive human. A richer reflection of self as intellectual being, engaging in actions and reactions in the world as an intellectual mode of becoming, enables a new conception of the ‘*singular being existing-*

for-itself (ibid.: 211 S362, *emphasis* in original), and a new spirit or consciousness (ibid.: 254 S439) as the ‘*immediate truth*’ (ibid.: 255 S440, *emphasis* in original). For Marx and Engels (1846/1998: 57), this pointed towards communism as ‘the real movement which abolishes the present state of things’. In reflecting upon the Paris commune, Marx (1871), extended this to a movement that ends the constant anarchy and periodical crises of capitalist production, through “possible” communism.’

A new qualitative role for University workers is required, away from the fetishised reduction of their work to modes of privilege and status. It is a new ‘*immanent determination*’ (Hegel 2010: 88, *emphasis* in original) that enables self-mediation here-and-now. The focus upon the immanent or inherent as a mode of proceeding towards self-determination within-and-against the world of value connects to the negation of content and forms that estrange individuals from their existences and worlds. For Hegel (ibid.: 90) this was concrete negation of the ground on which being is constructed, and it brings us back to *absolute* negativity, as the ground for self-mediation or self-determination.

Here, hooks’ (1994) reminds us to use the classroom as a space for transcendence, through which individuals can act as direct producers working in association for particular ends. The co-option of the classroom for human capital production is a mode of non-being and non-becoming. This is why revealing how curricula are focused upon employability, technological consumption of content, student satisfaction, and so on, is so important in working against helplessness and for abolition. Revelation demands a deeper sense of self-knowing against the capitalist University, precisely because that institution operates through pathologies and methodologies that demand a specific existence, which then requires cognitive dissonance and false consciousness to be deployed in order to survive.

In the process of revelation, self-determination requires a new purpose for education at the level of society, which *both* conserves and carries forward intersectional, intercommunal and intergenerational connections, *and* transcends the market, private property, the division of labour, and commodity-exchange as they mediate those connections. The abundance of plural ways of knowing, doing and being, *both* refuses the scarcity that the commodity imposes, *and* enables unity-through-difference. This *both* gestures towards decoloniality (as anti-capitalist practice) *and* enables hospicing ways of existing that are dying because they are unable to offer an existence beyond crisis management (Andreotti *et al.* 2018, Elwood *et al.* 2019). In the birth of new modes of radical knowing, relationality helps to braid what has been conserved and transcended, as the threads of healing. Critical here is divesting from degenerative paths that deny human being (Elwood *et al.* 2019), through a dialectical process that digests the lessons of the old and composts or recycles its waste. Hospicing, braiding and composting each act as generative, qualitative metaphors for activity in the world that sits with the hopeless existence of the University, in order to ‘assist with the birth of something new, undefined, and potentially (but not necessarily) wiser’ (Andreotti *et al.* 2018).

In this movement, a different imaginary is required, in order to overcome the modes of non-being demanded by the University, for instance through the bodies and lives of black women in the academy (Hull *et al.* 1982). The academy questions who is supposed to be here and why. It forces beings to divest themselves of their subjectivity and any objects that give the *wrong* appearance. It demands a particular quality of life that acts through coloniality to negate subjectivity through separation and estrangement. A dialectical movement looks to braid a different set of imaginaries and paths by internalising the systemic and systematic wounding

of identities and existences that are insisted on by particular logics of production. Indignant storytelling reveals objectification, productivity, impact and excellence as violent acts of denial. Such storytelling does not collapse the singular experience against particular demands and universal norms. Rather, it opens those experiences out, as new, pluralistic universalities able to connect to stories of injustice and hopelessness from inside-against-and-beyond the boundaries of the University.

Entangled subjectivities

Capital desires unilateral forms of social reproduction. Seeking pluralistic universalities is the refusal of classical, evidenced-based and objective views of reality. Re-engaging the idea that there are almost infinite, subjective imaginaries that coalesce as life reminds us that there are many possible histories. Moreover, the process of making history, which capital and its institutions seek to smooth-out and pre-determine, reminds us that the space and time of the University does not describe a singular, determinate system, and that it is deeply implicated inside a set of physical, emotional, cognitive, historical, material and cultural systems. Here, the alienated space-time of the University also infects our broader social reproduction, squeezing the time and space for self-care in ways that are not useful to us. The gravitational pull of the demands of cognitive and emotional labour for the University, skews our broader self-determination. This disables us from integrating ourselves as for humans, and from a fuller understanding of the interaction between our working and living practices as they are distorted by the universe of value.

In any dialectical process of reintegration, there is a need to focus upon the environment as immanent to the self: first, in its essence, appearance and existence; and second, in its being, its relationship to the other/nothing, and its becoming. This is a deepened,

dialectical mode of knowing the self in a variety of fractured characteristics, for instance, as: an academic; a white man who labours as a professor; an anxious person; an academic citizen; a carer; a partner; a volunteer. On top of these modes of knowing the self in particular contexts is the relationship between an essence that might be hidden, because it is unsafe for it to be revealed, and an appearance that is increasingly desired as productive, as a mode of existing. Yet these modes of existing are also immanent to other modes of becoming in particular environments, for instance, those which identify as black, queer, disabled, feminist, intersectional, intercommunal, intergenerational. This entanglement acts to shape the ways in which being is related to non-being, and how becoming is shaped communally.

We each contain the potential to be other than we are. Our being is also our *not-yet* (Gunn 1987), because it is not fixed in space-time, and contains alternative self-determinations. With a history that is constantly being remade in relation to the other, the *not-yet* already contains real possibility or is *always-already* (Bloch 1996). Pluralistic and inter-relational modes of becoming are entangled materially and historically, inside toxic, capitalist structures, pathological cultures and methodological practices. Whilst the unilateral demands of capital hide these entanglements behind the backs of the University's workers, the shape of other worlds is already present. There is a possibility for generating these worlds by decomposing, rupturing and venturing beyond hopelessness, through transcendent assemblages of courage, faith and yearning.

Transcendence carries forward the complexities of the institution, with its hopeless interconnection to value and its yearning to be socially-useful, into a new form that reflects its content and abolishes what was. This would be a new space-time for work that is entangled as: alienating in the imposition of disciplinary

performance management, whilst also enabling community or public engagement, problem-solving and personal self-knowing; a labour of love that also catalyses ill-being through a lack of autonomy over workload and task-focused acceleration; and, communal and abundant in potential, whilst also demanding the competitive redistribution of resources governed through scarcity.

In this process of sublation (*aufhebung*), our momentary existence, focused upon the interaction between our essence and appearance, is internalised and transformed, enabling a new actuality, defined in relation to other beings and the environment. This is an opening-out of being, which recognises how the individual, disciplinary and institutional separations imposed upon the University creates hopelessness. In the same moment, it recognises how those separations impact our consciousness (being in-itself) and self-determination (being for-itself). The process of sublating our being, such that it is integrated in a new mode of becoming, demands a new relation to others, and also that creating an objective, evidence-based and disciplinary view of the world is an impossibility.

In this courageous moment, it is possible to find faith in the reality that alternatives already exist, and are entangled with how we imagine the world. Whilst we feel that our reality is hopeless against value's power, we know that this is shaped through humanist values that offer a way to compost and recycle that reality. We know that we are overworked, and yet we know that our work offers potential for belonging and becoming. The symptoms of our pathological cultures and methodological practices are clear to us, and we also know that these are human-made. We have identities that are singular and many-faceted, and shaped in relation to other identities that are also singular and many-faceted. This gives us the possibility for developing a world of unity-through-difference.

Hopelessness and yearning cannot be described independently,

without damaging our subjectivity. There is a deep, apparent separation between these feelings, and yet they interact in the forms, pathologies and methodologies of the University. Our hopelessness cannot be fully described without considering that for which we yearn. This is not an attempt to describe the superposition of a system of HE as a truth that can be evidenced, because when we look at the individual, their institution or system, the act of measuring is a distortion. Distortion reflects a contradictory or paradoxical struggle: first, against measurement or evidenced-based, systemic analyses of the University, which maintain the integrity of the universe of value; and second, for engaging with the quantity of subjective experiences of the University, in order to define a new quality of life, and a new mode of measurement. We need to understand the University in order to transcend it, but in the process of looking at it, we cannot understand its composite and decoherent state. Through the act of measuring, we risk imposing conceptual or symbolic realities upon manifestations of life. In quantum mechanics, this is the effect identified by Greenberger, Horne and Zeilinger that the content of our subjectivity demands that we assign definite characteristics and properties to our corporeal and physical systems, whether we can actually measure them or not.

Whilst we desire the qualitative possibilities of measurement, our very act of measuring changes everything, by compelling particular quantities to assume definite qualities. However, in accepting the entangled subjectivities of the University, it becomes possible to consider the array of different, mutually-exclusive imaginaries of the institution, in relation to a wider environment. This is the possibility for creating a participatory University and social imaginary. A permanently conditional understanding of how our subjectivities are developed environmentally through complementarity with others helps to create a sense that there is

no need for projection onto an idealised future, rather that the paths we wish to follow are *always-already* available to us. This is crucial because through entanglement, rather than through an obsession with risk-based control, the entropic, stochastic nature of the universe of value is revealed, as is its decoherence or the ways in which it renders itself always conditional and subject to interpretation.

Spaces for agency and praxis reflect the contradictions between hopelessness of capitalist institutions and the yearning to know oneself more fully and relationally. The contradictions demonstrate entangled possibilities through which more humane paths might be realised. In this moment, when yearning and hopelessness are collapsed, we ask, what next? How do we make sense of this indeterminacy and these deep interconnections, in order to negate the universe of value and move towards alternative conceptions of being, knowing and doing? If the point of being human is knowing and transforming ourselves, can we forget about acting on the system of production, and refocus our action upon ourselves, in order that we abolish the present state of things by abolishing ourselves?

This feels weird, contradictory and paradoxical inside systems that demand separation, alienation, estrangement and particular forms of measurement of knowledge, commodities, individuals, disciplines and institutions. Yet, contradictory histories, emotions, ways of thinking, knowledges, skills, conceptions of technology and place, and so on, offer threads, strands or braids that might be reassembled in ways that make us feel more alive. Acknowledging hopelessness in how our identities are objectified in the capitalist university, enables us to recover our yearning for reassembling or braiding our own subjectivities or beings-for-themselves, here and now.

A regenerative movement beyond privilege sees University

workers acting for themselves and then beyond themselves as social beings. Work that is generative is important, in part because it enables more militant forms of imagining, rather than despairing pessimism. Pessimistic thinking resonates with capital's social metabolic control, which denies any way out other than through barbarism or the loss of hope for a better standard of living. Working against this centres a process of decomposing University labour, such that its divisions might be dissolved as a stage in moving towards its abolition rather than its fetishisation as some utopia. This work is always conditional, primarily because we do not seek to replace capital's mode of fetishisation with another represented by indigeneity or decoloniality. Instead, our content is our consenting not to be single beings, with forms that evolve through social aesthetics that open-out.

Whilst others have focused upon hope, the intention here is to steer away from this in a very deliberate fashion, precisely because of the concern that it is entropic in its relation to subjectivity. Yet, we must remember that worlds to come have been described through hope that: broadens human potential in ways that do not occlude subjectivity (Hudson 1982); is not bland optimism, rather a site of potential strength (Thompson and Žižek 2013); enables a balance between 'creative possibility and conformity' (Daly 2013: 165); and, is generative of awakening, substance and existence, rather than reproducing disillusionment (Dinerstein 2015). Bloch (1996) argues that hope enables creative human beings to overhaul their given, factual reality, and to realise the now, or the present, as an unfolding and conditional, dialectical movement. This is an anti-essentialist reading of subjectivity in relation to the unfolding of history, demanding a form of political pedagogy that is provocative yet teachable. Here, Amsler (2015) has argued that this can be learnt, and that it opens up other possibilities for onto-epistemological renewal, pivoting around justice and new

modes of knowing, alongside radical tenderness towards the world (D'Emilia and Chavez 2015).

The uncertainty and doubt of the world, also flowing through the University whilst it is denied there, might be attended to through hope. Or hope might be extended through a careful attentiveness to the social world in turmoil (Back 2020). Critical hope is a plea for work in the service of what might be (Philo and Parr 2019), which connects to hooks' (2003) call for taking the next step authentically. This worldly attentiveness erupts in the present as a guide for the future, through which a politics of hope expands in a non-linear terrain. This politics has been enmeshed with anticipatory storytelling as a mode of desiring, dreaming and fearing beyond extant complexities and abstract, cruel optimism (Lear 2006).

However, this is not the generative position of this argument, in which subjectivities are framed by hopelessness as an open sense of knowing the world. Such knowing acknowledges a yearning denied by the present state of things. This yearning is not wishful or craving. Instead, it is a longing situated in appearance, which enables an uncovering of the next layer in one's essence, as the ground of existence. We experience the pathological cultures of overwork and ill-being in the University, and perhaps we survive by becoming fugitive, through exodus, or by over-investment to our own detriment. However, by sitting with hopelessness and its entanglements with our desires for our work, our relationships, our environment and ourselves, we have the possibility to generate dialogue about the present state of things, in order to define new, absolutely negative paths.

This movement of negativity is a movement beyond hopelessness, and in the process, it generates new subjectivities as the form through which the social revolution must 'arrive at its own content' (Marx 1852). Moreover, this movement demands indignation, or

a scream of collective rage, against the indignity of the conditions inside which we are forced to live and die (Holloway 2003). This is a negative movement against the conditions of our impossibility and the denial of our subjectivity. Plural, indignant subjectivities rupture the particular, surplus existence that capital wishes us to have. In Tronti's (2019: 6) words, we have to 'become the greatest contradiction within the system, to the point of making the system's survival impossible and rendering possible and thus necessary the revolutionary rupture which liquidates and transcends it.'

For intellectual workers, the starting point is the inherent, negative, superposition of the University and its entanglements. Decomposing and composting this brutal settler-colonial and racial capitalist imaginary is the urgent matter of this time, with hopelessness as its starting point. It cannot be addressed from within the University, except by being against the University and its commodification of relationships, knowledge, curricula, working practices and conditions of labour, technocratic and bureaucratic systems of governance, and nature. At issue is how to enact the practice of being against, inside a competitive and brutalising environment through which subjectivity is distorted through processes of objectification, which reduce being to an idealised appearance that inheres with a productive essence. Here, hope has limited power inside a universe predicated upon human self-creation as reified human capital. As Marcuse (1974: 282, *emphasis in original*) argues, transformation requires a socialist subjectivity that is feminist (and also black, queer, disabled), 'as a *qualitatively* different society, [which] must embody the *antithesis*, the definite negation of the aggressive and repressive needs and values of capitalism as a form of male-dominated culture.'

Such a qualitatively different society is immanent *both* to a qualitatively different University *and* to a qualitatively different subjectivity, predicated upon compassion, trust, empathy,

security and love (Dowrick 1997: 201). It recognises the work of critique, in relation to, for instance, ‘colour-blind intersectionality’ (Carbado 2013), or white privilege in defining imaginaries of global consumption (Bhattacharyya 2018). Moving beyond a one-sided and false interpretation of being, this refuses to engage with hope as an idealistic affirmation (Marx 1844/1974). Instead, working through hopelessness enables pain to be transformed, and meaning and purpose to become generative (Crawford 2019). It enables revolutionary change to focus upon refusing the internalised reproduction of the oppressor as a mode of ongoing exploitation, expropriation and extraction. This is an ongoing process of decoloniality, which deliberately diminishes predominant voices, disinvest from power structures, devalues hierarchies, decentres knowledge production, and diversifies ways of knowing. Its movement is to generate empathy and mutuality towards entangled subjectivities, such that individuals become many-sided, social beings, capable of lifelong transformation. These are the human-prefigured, relational and dynamic conditions of possibility, which are the composted grounds of new paths.

Composting the anti-human University

For many, the conditions of possibility have re-emerged at the end of *The End of History*. In the conjuncture of crises, we question hegemony, and the cartel-like nature of the institutions that govern social life. In the pandemic, the fragility of hegemonic conditions has been revealed, as white-collar labourers witness their labour becoming more estranged and technologically-mediated, and as service labourers are forced to work for a precarious living in conditions that threaten their lives. Increasingly, the pandemic shows the one-sided nature of the bargain between capital and labour, as the former mediates life for-value.

In the financial-epidemiological crises, the very body of the

systems that shape capital are revealed as rotting and unable to be remade without further exploitation, expropriation and extraction. The forms and content of its institutions are financially weakened, constrained by directive governance, and regulated increasingly for inhumane ends. Struggles against this rotten inhumanity are revealed, for instance, in reports of student rent strikes across the UK in December 2020. This disconnect between conceptions of what it means to live and study in these allegedly most liberal of institutions reminds us of: protests at UC Davis in 2011 around the occupy movement, when students were pepper-sprayed by University police; the role of Delhi police against student protesters at Jamia Millia Islamia University in 2019; and, the killing of student protesters in Sudan in 2019.

The intersection of crises demonstrates the systemic inability to expand through an increased rate of profit, and as a result social goods like education, welfare, social security and healthcare have been privatised, pensions have come under assault, and labour conditions and remuneration are under extreme stress. In the eruption of contradictions between the conditions required for a humane life and the conditions demanded for economic expansion, history has returned in ways that demonstrate the invalid nature of capitalist social relations. In labour's inability to escape its everyday alienation and capital's denial of decent work, the contrary, lived experiences of overwork, ill-being, precarity, and exploitation, a failing political economy is described. Moreover, we might see this political economy and the forms of its institutions as ripe for decomposition.

For some, decomposition can be propagated through pedagogic practices that focus upon self-actualisation or awareness-identity, formed inside a counter-system of education rooted in the possibility of prefiguring other ways of knowing how to live. This is a generative, iterative and educative process, which reimagines

the University as a pedagogical project beginning from humans and their society, embedded and reproduced in nature. It is a 'sacred' project, grounded in 'the practice of freedom' (hooks 1994: 13), as a process, integrated with the souls of students and teachers, and in symbiosis with 'the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin' (ibid.).

This is not the platform University's search for algorithmic truth. Instead, the relationship between symbiosis and necessary conditions is critical in venturing beyond being-for-value, and learning to live with uncertainty as an ever-present. At the end of *The End of History*, we recognise how capital's social metabolism, or its consumption of planetary life, has become unstable. In its search for more energy, and to maintain its internal validity and coherence, its institutions are destroying more of the fabric of life. Inside the University, this has metastasised as alienating forms, predicated upon pathological cultures and methodological practices. Viable paths for breathing, loving and living are being subsumed under capital's desperate search for expansive energy, reinforced through authoritarian and disciplinary governance inside institutions and through their funding and regulatory arrangements.

However, these remain spaces for mutuality, solidarity, courage, faith, justice and peace. The very presence of these humane values in the work of delivering and/or supporting teaching, learning, scholarship, public engagement, academic citizenship and research, offers a way of furthering the decomposition of a toxic system and its toxic institutional imaginaries. Here, French et al. (2020) describe composting as a metaphor for re-engaging humans with the conditions inside which they reproduce their world. As diseased institutions, cultures and practices decay, it is possible to witness how they break down into their constituent parts, or their base elements, and how those might enable new ecosystems to emerge.

There is an immanence between institutional and identity-related decomposition, such that as the systemic rationale for capitalist institutions is separated out, analysed and broken down, the roles, privileges, modes of status and relations of production that were factory-farmed inside those institutions become less viable. This is also true of the disciplines which give them internal validity, but that also give nutrients to be recycled, in the form of the general intellect of skills, knowledges and capabilities, reimagined as mass intellectuality.

As capital's social metabolic control, or value's systemic energy and relationships with humans and nature, deteriorates, it requires more energy and resources to maintain its internal coherence. Thus, it is possible to imagine that mode of control passing away. It is possible to engage with what Cajete and Williams (2020) describe as the indigenous mythopoetic tradition, which uses oral and symbolic traditions to develop self- and communal-awareness of eco-aesthetics. Offering a mode of insight that re-centres knowing, doing and being beyond value, this widens a spiritual engagement with what it means to be human-in-nature. Hence, decomposition gains its own energy that points towards the possibility for an alternative recycling of what it means to be human. Indigenous, feminist, critical race, queer and intersectional modes of analyses act as spores or seeds for further decomposition, and enable a range of alternative, compostable paths to be opened-up. This is a richer ecosystem, where the identity of being and other defines becoming rather than estrangement (Hamilton and Neimanis 2018).

Is it possible to decompose the University, and in particular, its socially-useful building blocks, in the form of modes of knowledge, skills, capacities, technologies, and so on, and to recombine or recycle them? Is it possible to do so in the recombination of disciplines against the fetishisation of specificity? Is it possible

to do so by releasing the emotional, psychological and cognitive subjectivity of those who labour, such that they become many-sided, rather than restricted in role? Is it possible to do so by releasing the capacities of the institution into its communities, and vice versa? These questions are important in building new webs or ecosystems, using the metaphor of the metabolic activity of fungi and bacteria to: decompose what is; extract essential nutrients; and then, serve and be served symbiotically by a renewed ecosystem (Kendrick 2011; Sheldrake 2020). This conceptualises how to turn a system of unliveable, alienated-labour into a life-world that is both enriched and workable.

Making life workable is the possibility and purpose of composting. The ability to decompose an alienating University life by recycling and sharing the ecological richness of the humanistic side of its entanglements, acts to marginalise its economistic imaginary. Here, the University acts as a waste or a wasteland, which might be turned into fertiliser, through sensuous, material activity. Moreover, the development of the equivalent of a mycorrhizal network, through which fungal ecosystems might enable enriched transfer of nutrients and the creation of more favourable conditions for life, are predicated upon the dissolution of intellectual work into new communal networks of life. The potential is for the content of the University as a joint venture and association of capitals to be released into society, flooded with the possibilities for mutuality and solidarity and aimed at building communal goods.

As Sheldrake (2020) notes for fungi, this process has an evolutionary function, and enables an unfolding of new ecosystems. Can mycorrhizal networks work to decompose the University of value, and then release the energy of its entangled humanity? Just as mycelium is the tissue that holds the world together (*ibid.*), the path towards communism fruits from ecosystems that have a new,

universal social metabolism. A starting point is a thick dialogue grounded in lived experiences of exploitation, expropriation and extraction, in this case emerging from ‘stories of displacement, dispossession, dislocation, disclosure/enclosure, discomfort/comfort and binaries’ (French et al. 2020). In engaging with the realities of settler colonialism, these authors identify hegemonic structures, pathologies and methodologies as ‘invasive, ongoing and invisible’, and which scrub existing human relations of any meaning. They act through a destructive, parasitic social metabolism. Here, composting anger, grief and trauma shapes a process of unearthing and breaking down distortions, and thereby creating ‘a garden of truth-telling’ (ibid.).

The process of composting centres the churning of humanity and feelings, stories, histories, relationships, cultures and lands. Rather than a single, positivist sense of truth-telling, grounded in commodity-knowledge, this is an opening out of intellectual work with the realities of its material conditions, grounded in humane values. There are so many of these experiences in the University, represented in angst-lit, sick-lit and quit-lit. Engaging with these struggles in educational contexts requires reflection on the realities of the time and space required for truth-telling, alongside individual fallibilities and personal limitations, and potential for paralysis when faced by overwhelming, structural crises and forms of power. As a result, it feels easier to attempt to describe an alternative conception for the future of the University, rather than to find ways to act for its decomposition and recycling.

However, in the desire to curate and cultivate ways of living more humanely, those who labour in might usefully seek to grapple with Tuck’s (2018) question: ‘how shall we live?’ In a technologically-enriched, interconnected set of environments, inside which individual behaviours and actions are increasingly cybernetically tracked and controlled, and inside which legitimacy is judged in

relation to systemic norms, this question is both imperative and revolutionary. This is more so because the idea of composting the world as it is, speaks to a system that needs to decompose, and lives that need to be fertilised in new ways, lest they wither or remain unfulfilled. Against the morbid realities of HE, this is a starting point for reimagining the relationship between humans and their integration in institutions, cultures and practices.

It is not enough to recognise the asymmetrical nature of our entanglements, and to flood a decaying system with moments of courage, faith, mutuality and solidarity. This needs to be done proactively and militantly, through discussion between students, professional services' staff and academics, and between precarious and tenured staff, in ways that highlight intersectional, intergenerational and intercommunal injustices. It must disrupt flows of value inside institutions, and join that disruption into societal struggles for liveable lives. This requires self-work, in order to divest individuals of their addiction to privilege and status, and to see themselves becoming in relation to the other, and in relation to yearning. It requires that new ecosystems are defined against the denial of the other, which in reality is the evaporation of being and its reduction to a reified, particular essence. This forms a potential, communist becoming of the world (Marx 1875/1970).

The conjuncture of crises is an important moment in shaping a new metabolism. Just as capitalist hyper-realism attempts to annihilate or ignore Covid-19, it also attempts to annihilate or ignore the crises of hyper-financialisation. Yet the novel coronavirus is a potential fungus in the circuits of money, productive and commodity capital, as it infects the present state of things in ways that climate crises, conceptualised against the future, do not. Impacting the global centres of capitalism, the tendrils of the virus reveal how the system and its institutions brutalise life for the autonomy of capital. By following its tendrils in the circuits of

social reproduction, we might indignantly flood capital's circuits with forgiveness, dignity, generosity, and respect, as acts of love.

An indignant movement of dignity

Decomposing opens-up the struggle for plural worlds. Multiple, mutual ways of knowing erupt from the theorisation of singular, lived experiences, which themselves set the grounds upon which the manifestations of our exploitation, expropriation and extraction are made common. Whilst suffering is absolutely relative, situating the cause, rather than the effects, of that suffering in critiques of our mode of social reproduction, enable us to move beyond symptomatic responses, and address the ways in which our differences, fed upon and exacerbated by capital's social metabolic control, also offer us a potential moment for mutuality and unity.

The commonality of our struggle erupts against the divisions and separations that are imposed between academics, professional services' staff and students, with differential access to privilege, status and resources. The commonality of struggle maps across the binaries and boundaries of public/private and corporate/co-operative, precisely because the University is an associated capital, through which difference is generalised in society. The ways in which particular identities are delegitimised, estranged or alienated inside the University, pour across those boundaries through public engagement, knowledge transfer, teaching in public, and so on. There are increasing opportunities for recognising how the labour that is alienated inside the institution is mirrored by that which is estranged beyond.

This is predicated upon the exploitation and expropriation of that labour, which tends to breed hopelessness and helplessness as a generalised manifestation. Uncovering this, in order to celebrate difference as a unifying mode of being, is essential to creating a more liveable life. Here, building new, indignant paths

undermines capital as a social mode of production, where those routes are an open form of transcendence. They are open in that they take our experience of capital, in its anxiety-inducing institutions, pathologies and methodologies, and show how they generalise misery, degradation and exploitation. Walking away sows the seeds of generalised refusal and *aufhebung*.

The logic of misery is predicated upon an inauthentic movement of humanity. Instead, we demand that such logics and movements are ruptured and turned inside out, such that their humane content is not constrained by the value-form. This requires that the fundamental problems of society are addressed in ways that are almost irresponsible in their yearnings, grounded in collective struggle that seeks to shut down the alienating content and structure of the forms of capitalist institutions. In individuated struggles, we have seen this in indignant responses to student fees, accommodation costs, precarious working conditions for graduate teaching assistants, cops on campus, decolonising, and sexual violence on campus.

These are modes of refusing domination by the structures that deny life as authentic becoming. Refusal seeks to liberate being for a different end, beyond value, which might take energy from the indignation that erupts from existences that have been made marginal or forced to become fugitive (Harney and Moten 2013). These refuse the conditions of capital's social metabolic control. They are not to be reformed or made progressive, because the creation of cultures that are non-pathological and activities that are non-methodological inside a system of injustice 'is premised on the progress of a world that ought to be stopped in its tracks' (Bonefeld, quoted in PlanC 2019). Dinerstein (2015) argues that the process of stopping a system of injustice demands that we open fronts of political possibility. This must include the University, through a coordinated and indignant liberation of its socially-

useful content, which will also serve as a refusal of the ways in which value shapes its forms through pathologies of competition that deliver 'privileges to groups who are socialised to affirm exceptional intellectual success' (Morrish and Sauntson 2019: 150).

Indignation is crucial in disentangling the humanity/value dyad and working through how we affirm/refuse its entanglements. Of course, this leaves us open to questions of access to means of subsistence, but this is another front of political possibility where explicit links are made to other movements of struggle for social goods. For instance, the struggle for education connects to work in social welfare centres, food banks, worker co-operatives, childcare collectives, medical social centres, and so on. Building explicit links around social forms of knowing, rather than commodified knowledge, helps to infect, inflect, invert and rupture the University, where they demonstrate and build alternative social strength. As Tronti (2019: xxix) argues, 'to force a rupture at some point means bringing together at this same point all the forces that want to break the web as a whole. Every further link between the various parts of capital is a further channel of communication between the diverse constituents of the working class.'

Thus, those who labour inside the University need to take their sense of helplessness and vulnerability, and ground it in the social reality of a hopeless existence, with a focus: first, for the liberation of intellectual work; and second, against what the University has become. Through public engagement, community action, the generation of new ways of knowing, classroom activity with students, the indignant beauty of difference can guide new fronts of political possibility. As a result, capital's insistence that existence must be reduced to the purity of the value-form, alongside the contingency of humane values, can be refused.

This work cannot be undertaken as a lamentation. University workers must move against the anxiety machine, which defines

capability through the symbolic impossibility of pure productivity. Where human capital becomes everything, inside an audit culture that demands self-actualisation against discourses of impact, excellence and entrepreneurship, the boundaries of the University narrow, whilst its complexity and specificity grows. This must be transcended and overcome by enabling the indignant power of singular, alienated existences in such quantities that they define a new quality of life through the denunciation of what is. As Erickson et al. (2020: 5) note, *statactivism*, or the militant use of figures might be a tactic that casts doubt. Widening the horizon of doubt demands militant, public research that refuses the present state of things through the revelation of oppressive conditions for life. Militancy ruptures the system's ideological and conceptual limitations made concrete through its institutions, and this forms a potential starting point.

Communities do not a movement that seeks to renew what was, or hark back to an idealisation or essentialism of the University. Rather, what matters is the process of defining new paths that hold to account institutional leaders and the wider transnational activist networks of power inside which they are implicated. There is deliberately no single path that looks to answer for what should the University exist or be. Instead, we need a process that indignantly questions our acceptance that the University is a transitional or transhistorical entity. It is wasteful to focus upon the search for alternatives, utopias or blueprints for the University. These merely mirror the risk-based approaches to assurance upon which the current institutional instantiation is based. It is less important for intellectual workers to focus upon a hopeful future than for what they yearn now as a starting point for struggle. This is a move for solidarity across oppressions and against alienating conditions of labour and life, as a movement beyond helplessness and vulnerability in the present. A new

dynamic refuses the paralysis that emerges from our inability to define the future.

The present is pivotal, and the process of healing is one of questioning, and then mobilising or moving. This reproduces the potentiality of *preguntando caminamos*, or *asking, we walk* (Marcos 2002), as a recovery of the idea that we make our own history and our own paths through collective dialogue, based upon where we find ourselves. We can only move towards ‘our true heart’ (ibid.: 268) in the next moment, by understanding our modes of knowing, doing and being in the present moment. This teaches ‘how the world was born and show where it is to be found’ (ibid.: 276), as a movement of dignity. The struggle for movement delineates life as pedagogic practice, and erupts from our present, hopeless situation as a demand for generalised, intellectual engagement with alternative ways of making the world, and being in it. It is predicated upon abolishing separation, for instance between teacher and student, and transcending roles, such that each individual articulates their intellectual capabilities as a social activity.

As Holloway (2010: 235) argues, ‘[l]iving in capital means that we live in the midst of contradiction’, and finding ways to rupture that contradiction is a critical, historical question. In acknowledging the return of history, we recognise the potential for developing paths based upon *preguntando caminamos* and anchored in concrete, lived experiences, as a movement of becoming. Such becoming is the material production of history, as a constant unfolding. It is useful to be reminded here that in capital’s historical development ‘*everything posited is also a presupposition*’ (Marx 1857/1993: 278, *emphasis* in original). Every step closes and opens, and brings the self into a truer relation with the world.

A continual unfolding is the movement of hearts in each and every moment. A movement of hearts recognises how the

University demands intensification or annihilation, and works to transcend labour as the annihilation of humane being and becoming. Without the communal, anticipatory abolition of labour, we will witness capital's continual deployment of oppressive organisational and technological fixes that work for its abolition with concomitant, anti-social ramifications (Gorz 1982). This is a step in the refusal of the algorithmic control of the platform University, which uses technologies like facial recognition software to heighten sensations of oppression and anxiety. A movement of hearts defines paths for exodus away from capital's management of its organic composition, as a negation of the technologically-infused space-time of its institutions.

Our paths are predicated upon revelation of: the ways in which the University is incapable of responding to the intersection of financial and epidemiological crises; how environmental catastrophe is amplified through institutional infrastructure and internationalisation projects that respond to the law of value; how the labour of the University worker is quantified and harvested for further accumulation; and how the University reinforces identity-based crises, experienced intersectionally and intergenerationally by workers made marginal by capital's social metabolism. The next step is towards negation as an active contribution to the dissolution of knowledge and privilege as commodities. Our paths seek to abolish the forces and relations of production inside the anxiety machine, and to create new spaces that are no longer predicated upon a conception of time that is 'uniform, continuous, homogenous... [and] empty of events' (Postone 1993: 202).

The return of events is our collective ability to make history, as beings-for-ourselves. This requires an opening-out of subjectivity, predicated upon opening-out of dignity, mutuality and solidarity. It requires that individuals see their singular humanity mirrored in the other, rather than seeking to annihilate the other, in

order to protect their own appearance before capital. Rather than encouraging narcissistic pathologies inside the hopeless institutions, the mirroring of self and other enables new ways of knowing, new modes of empathising, and new spaces for healing. These are not predicated upon evidence-based practice, pure knowledge production, or specific epistocracies from within competitive institutions. They are predicated upon material histories that dismantle the established subjectivities of University workers, 'to ensure the triumph of humanity rather than property' (Austin 2013: 142).

Beyond the University at the end of *The End of History*

Is another university desirable?

From the rediscovery of history begins the practice of dignity, as a process of confronting, decomposing and recycling our existence inside institutions of capitalist accumulation. These institutions, and their pathological cultures and methodological practices are ‘the red dust of living death’, which encircles our lives and catalyses futility, cynicism, anxiety, anger or fugitivity (Chuǎng 2019a). As the conditions of life become more toxic for more people, ‘[t]he only emancipatory politics is one that grows within and against the red dust of the material community of capital’ (ibid.).

Countering the red dust of living death is an embodied, emotional, intellectual and historical practice that questions how those who are struggling inside universities engage with working class organisation, rather than further alienating it. This is especially the case at a time when the working class is under extreme stress, in terms of access to critical goods, and the widening and deepening of the forces of proletarianization. These

forces are enabled, in part, through the subsumption of University work for-value. Instead of ignoring working class needs, yearnings and red lines, for instance in access to energy, housing, welfare and healthcare, intellectual activity in society might usefully focus upon how to engage in the development of communal literacy. This might include decisions around the form and content of the Commons.

Here, there is the potential for a new front in the relationship between University workers and the State, which continually shows itself incapable of moving except to address the symptoms of systemic dislocations that infect flows of capital (Malm 2020). The red dust spreads through the environment as the State and its institutions are reduced to mitigating the effects of intersecting financial, epidemiological or climate crises. The gravitational pull of value means that extreme duress is needed before States can commit to societal adaptation (Malm 2016). Malm (2020) argues that our political forms are unable to move beyond fossil fuels, and that their high inertia reflects the inability of social institutions to look beyond issues that immediately affect our corporeal and temporal existences. In these moments, intellectual work in society is geared around risk-management and mitigating the effects of, for example, the pandemic.

The response of universities is to annihilate the symptoms of disruptions and dislocations through Promethean responses, or to ignore them in the promotion of business-as-usual. Thus, Malm (2020) discusses the learning to be taken by communities from the Bolshevik's war communism, which faced intersecting crises in the aftermath of World War One, and began to practice forms of abolition of mediations like private property. Malm is clear that the discourse and language of war is problematic, but that it is symbolic of the need to work against the consumption and entropy imposed by that privileged fraction of global actors

whose mitigation responses to crises are designed to sustain the reproduction of capital. This also connects to Graeber's (2011) idea of baseline communism, and the idea of disaster communism of the Out of the Woods' Collective (2014), which shapes communal responses and potential communisation in response to disasters and dislocations.

There are questions here for University workers in how they situate their work against actually-existing emergencies, and the reality that for many communities and environments, disaster has arrived. How is their work to refuse its reduction to solutions for mitigation emergencies in the global centres of accumulation, or commodity-dumping in the periphery? This includes in relation to the utopian fragilities and tensions of sustainable development (Eskelinen 2021). In reinforcing extant cycles of production, rather than framing authentic community-based analyses of need, they provide limited capacity for engaging with looming adaptation emergencies, like access to food, soil erosion, mass migration and water availability. In pre-empting such adaptation emergencies, cognitive and psychological, epistemological breaks are needed that refuse the structures, cultures and practices that have brought us to the brink. Otherwise, societies face imposed adaptations like climate lockdowns, the rise of techno- or eco-fascism, martial law and so on.

There is no place here for elitist fantasies of abundance, like fully-automated luxury communism, which reimagine forms of elite existences and lifestyles. These Promethean fantasies maintain disconnections, including from the environment, and reinforce settler-colonialism, for instance, in the idea of mining asteroids. All this whilst the actually-existing reality is of a world where subalterns are already facing the limits of life through global forcing, with limited or lost access to land, energy, shelter and water. How might intellectual work be recalibrated as anti-utopian

at the level of society, driving at a discussion of the limits and potential horizons of human need on a global scale, where there are likely to be shortages of critical goods, including land, water and soil? What is the role of intellectual work and the University in these discussions?

This questions whether it is possible to re-purpose, convert, or compost the hopeless institutions of a dying system (Winn 2015). Is it possible to build the forms of a new, communist world by recycling content from inside the structures of the old, and decomposing their forms? Or is exodus all the agency we have? Here, we recognise differential experiences of the University, depending upon global position, geopolitics, national priorities, and our situation insides singular associations of capitals. We recognise the potential for some classrooms and institutions to act and work communally, as prefigurative, pedagogical spaces that manage the production of resources, and their distribution as a commonly-held social consumption fund, even whilst the system militates against humanity.

Questions of communal forms move beyond the corporate, and need to address delegation and decision-making, alongside governance. In considering intellectual work beyond the University-as-is, we consider the potential for communities to form elements of a mycorrhizal ecosystem, connected to other socially-useful goods. This surfaces discussions over the distribution of resources across and between ecosystems or communes (Ciccariello-Maher 2016). It is a socially-useful, intellectual process, as well as one that works on intellectual resources, which points towards Marx's (1875/1970) description of the lower form of communism. The content of this form was transitional, framed by a refusal of bourgeois ideas of equality based upon human capital as an equal standard applied from an objective point of view. Such a view is a one-sided and restricted take on what it means to be human.

Instead, Marx (ibid., *emphasis in original*) stressed the need to abolish a society in which humans 'are regarded *only as workers* and nothing more is seen in them, everything else being ignored'.

When applied to our current institutions, the application of an equal standard, imposed to maintain the integrity of capital accumulation, denies the immediacy of caring responsibilities, disability, gender or racialised forms of privilege. It also denies the validity of lives beyond value, and that not be shaped by exploitation, expropriation and extraction. Marx (ibid.) is clear that in moving beyond capitalism to a first phase of communist society, we will have to move our storytelling, emotionality, cognition and relationships (including with nature) towards accepting an alternative form of *Right*, predicated upon individuals being unequal. Their identity is based on their difference, rather than through comparison as particular human capital, mediated by commodity-exchange, private property, the division of labour and the market.

In Marx's ethnographic notebooks, communal shares enabled the material flourishing of the community (Krader 1974). Taken with his *Critique of the Gotha Program* (Marx 1875/1970), this later Marx begins to look for paths away from a society predicated upon 'the enslaving subordination of the individual', towards a world where the recombination of intellectual and physical work enables an all-sided individual development. This moves beyond the need to voice and defend singular identifications against whiteness and white privilege, because in a world where the productive forces and relations of production have reduced the realm of necessary labour, the need to be white, or to mirror whiteness, as a bulwark against *both* the other *and* scarcity has vanished. This requires consensus against the law of value, through intellectual work in society, where a new form of becoming accepts the individual as a many-sided being. Here, co-operative wealth overcomes the

defence of identity-relations based upon commodity production, and individual being is no longer an essentialised identity defined in competition with the other. Rather, being emerges through an existence that shines as it is reflected in the other, as a new mode of becoming.

This is a crucial moment in negating the hopeless University at the end of *The End of History*, through which 'the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!' (ibid.). Any path away from a capitalist system of exploitation, expropriation and extraction, and the hopeless institutions that reinforce it, demands a negative, categorical analysis of the relationship between: first, alienated-labour; second, identities as they are shaped systemically in the relationship between essence-appearance-existence, and being-nothing-becoming; and third, institutional forms, cultures and practices. Here, 'the absolute working-out of [our] creative potentialities' becomes possible, and individuals might produce themselves as a totality, 'not to remain something [they have] become, but [to exist] in the absolute movement of becoming' (Marx 1857/1993: 488). This stands against 'universal objectification as total alienation', and the 'sacrifice of the human end-in-itself to an entirely external end' (ibid.). In this, the movement of becoming between singular individuals, the particular demands of institutions, and the universal nature of wider society, unfolds.

Yet there are struggles and contradictions in this process. How can intersectional, intercommunal and intergenerational injustice be made visible, and overcome? Can we move institutions beyond their associational operation in a capitalist totality, and towards a social ecology of communes? What is the role of universities here, given that they are already able to mobilise organisational development and innovation, technologies and flows of data, and

ways of negotiating production, governance and regulation? Might we shape a changed foundation of production, which acts for the liberation of the general intellect of society? These infrastructures might be re-formed through a societal displacement of the private sector and the transfer of private intellectual property, and thereby recycle institutional content including knowledge, to direct, communal control (Hall 2014).

New institutional imaginaries reflect a new symbolism, to be worked out collectively as a movement of indignity that is generative, rather than essentialised or romanticised. This recognises that capital and its institutions are real illusions emerging from our alienated labour, which displace our energies towards a toxic, social metabolic control. As our history of material production returns to the present, we ask: is another University desirable and possible, or does the University-as-is need to be abolished? We make capital and reproduce its universe of value, through our everyday, institutional activities. We have to find the mutual courage and faith to refuse to do this, and to press beyond the simple amelioration of the degradation of the conditions of labour and its immediate environment.

Capital's movement of the forces and relations of production are its attempt to reassert stable forms of accumulation in a world that cannot bear them. The University is a crucial mode in this movement of reassertion, and it acts as if it is part of a deterministic system. Therefore, it works to reject the realities of life as an open, non-linear and exponentially chaotic movement of becoming. Our work is entangled with this moving contradiction, and must prioritise Césaire's (1956/1969: 39) invocation: 'I must begin // Begin what? // The only thing in the world that is worth beginning: // The End of the World, no less.' A new ground for existence at the level of society must be prepared, ahead of recycling what has been transcended, carried forward or recycled towards

new ontologies and epistemologies, which negate value and its modes of life (Yusoff 2018). Such a ground cannot be the reform of established institutions, because these reproduce the false hope of the University as a white vector that denies the anger of those who have wearied of hoping, and who are sustained through courage, faith and mutuality as survival pending revolution.

The University-as-is remains too hopelessly wedded to the reproduction of an exclusionary epistemic space, which denies hope as anything other than liberal and utopian. At *The End of History*, the predicament for those who work inside the University is how to overcome hope, and negate it through a movement of indignity. In this way, inverted associations and alignments might be opened up, as mycorrhizal ecosystems that decompose the architecture of knowledge production, which offers no way out of the suffocating conjuncture of crises.

Forms of antipathy

The University is constantly opened out and reshaped in association. Its terrain of suppression makes it imperative that we find ways to re-purpose it by decomposing its value-driven imaginary. This involves taking the interconnections that flow through the institution into other corporate forms, businesses, charities, modes of local and national government, transnational and philanthrocapitalist organisations, and doing something else with them. Such doing is, of course, impossible from within the University alone. It must be part of a wider, dialogical and dialectical questioning of the foundations upon which society is reproduced. This requires the resumption of ‘the project which Marx initiated of linking an emancipatory social theory to an emancipatory social practice’ (Clarke 1994: 255).

The University offers forms inside which new relations and forces of production can be catalysed and released. Given the centrality

of universities and their infrastructures to particular regions, in spite of their transnational claims, it is possible for them to sit as a transitional moment in the development of communes. As Marx (1871) argued, the commune is the positive form of a republic, or a re-publicing of social life, predicated upon the self-government of the producers. In his writings on the Paris commune, Marx (ibid.) noted the power of opening-out educational institutions to the people, and removing the interference of mediating bodies, in his case Church and State, and in ours value chains.

Here, the focus is upon a new, universal appreciation of democratic life, rather than hierarchy and appropriation. Such a democratic life, emerging immanent to ecosystems of institutions like universities capable of recycling social goods, is a path away from the autonomy of capital. Marx (ibid.) was clear that this would involve a series of re-integrations: of natural science with philosophy as education is opened-out; of democratic political forms with economic emancipation; and, of humans with their society. Rather than the ongoing separation and estrangement of individuals from themselves, of politics from economy, and of modes of knowing from the world, new coalitions and associations might arise.

Attempts have been made from within the University to struggle for new paths, focused upon student-worker alternatives: first, as protests rooted in a locality, like the Maagdenhuis in Amsterdam in 2015; second as spatio-temporal projects like the ROU in Leeds, UK, or represented by *After the fall, Communiqués from occupied California*; third, as informal transnational collectivities like the EduFactory Collective or Tent City University in London, UK; and fourth, as on-going projects with formal and co-operative governance structures, like The Social Science Centre in Lincoln, UK. These alternatives differ in scale, structure and content from more hierarchical alternatives, such as Mondragon University in

the Basque region, or the Co-operative University in English HE.

These alternatives are already infused with a prefigurative politics that connects historically and materially to autonomous educational work, for example of the Brazilian Landless Worker's Movement, the Mesopotamian Social Sciences Academy in Qamislo, or the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico. Might they shape communal, intellectual responses to crises? Inside the singular institutions of the North, this is almost impossible to imagine, notwithstanding the narrative power of workers' enquiries of individual resistances to particular capitalist institutions (WIN 2020). The ability to interconnect notionally fragmented struggles against precarious graduate labour, for rent strikes, against cops on campus, for free tuition, against sexual violence on campus, has power through solidarity actions. The key is to identify 'how individual resistances coalesce to become collective and how collective resistance plays out, whether covert or overt' (Hudis 2012: 216). This needs a politics that seeks to map the contours and connections of exploitation, expropriation and extraction, and that focuses upon non-homogenising and anti-vanguardist social movements.

As the social world is repurposed through crises around an accelerated competition over scarce livelihoods and standards of living, is there space to build the alternative from within what already exists? Or is the only possibility to argue for less alienating work in an environment that is becoming more efficiently unsustainable? Are arguments over four-day weeks or the reallocation of disposable time, potential transitional demands? Is it possible to use technology and the relations of production, to generate an increased sense of what needs to be done as well as organising around different paths? For Mészáros (2010: 186) these are important questions, precisely because 'structural change is feasible only by challenging capital in its entirety as a mode of

social metabolic control’.

Our questions point towards the need: first, to dissolve the structures and infrastructures of the University into society, at the level of the local; second, to frame local, communal action for a wider communalism in workplaces and communities; and third, to join this work into regional, national and transnational fronts. Interconnections and the process of dissolving, are designed to reconnect the institution with its social grounds, in particular, the needs of working class and proletarianised communities. The structures and infrastructures of the University reflect the organisation of its work at the level of society, and this continues to deform intellectual work and to deny a new, good sense based upon new communal ecosystems and structures.

How this might be done is not to be answered here, precisely because that kind of blueprinting, recommending, and outsourcing solutions is a fundamental part of the problem of the University and of society more broadly. Instead, we require a communal and horizontal dialogue around how we wish to know ourselves and our world, as an ongoing process of creating the objective and subjective conditions for life. Inside the University, dialogue is predicated upon everyday, co-operative struggles for direct democracy, grounded in representative decision-making and general assemblies. Our struggle is to find paths through better working conditions, towards their annihilation in the abolition of labour. We begin by identifying the brutalising realities of managerialism and value, as a moment of overcoming fear and anxiety, in order to intensify antagonisms.

This is a direct and antagonistic process against the forms that the institution has taken, and the ways in which those have infected our society. It is designed to question those forms, and the competitive relations of production that they demand, and instead generate solidarity and mutuality. It is difficult to find

the energy for this work, given the inertia inherent in the forms of the institution when faced by humane values. Such inertia is not present when faced by economic value, but the work is to recycle our shared narratives and values as the compost upon which a new mycorrhizal ecosystem might grow and decompose what is. In decomposing and recycling, we work with a purpose that knows that the institution is social and told in stories rather than sold through commodities and services. It is built upon an intergenerational, intercommunal and intersectional, material history that has been taken from us as private property. We know that we must find our voices, and a new emotional and cognitive ecosystem that is anti-value.

By revealing how the structures and forms of the institution entangle hopelessness and possibility, it becomes possible to highlight that the antitheses of our alienating structures are contained within them. As Holloway (1992: 158) argues, '[t]he sheer unrest of life is held captive in fetishised forms, in a series of things, but it is always there, always bursting its bounds, always forcing the fetishised forms to reconstitute themselves to keep it captive.' This is the morphing of the University, shifting its associations, restructuring its relations of production, becoming agile or lean, with a focus on its people and environment as resources rather than as living relations. It is not for us to advance a blueprint for ending *The End of History*. Rather, we must use our energy courageously and faithfully to listen to each other, to out the unsustainability of the current capitalist imaginary, and to find paths beyond our ongoing self-denials. We must find the collective courage and faith to say "No!"

This requires a different kind of intellectual work, through which 'the reciprocal interpenetration in all spheres of human activity and at all levels' dismantles social structures in ways that refuse the 'utopian reassembly of existing hierarchies' (Mészáros 1972:

91). A new, intellectual content for social life requires new forms appropriate to self-determination and beings-for-themselves, rather than one which is abstract, mediating and dehumanising. This congeals around the idea that intellectual domination from inside the structure of the University needs to be negated. As Marcuse (1967) noted ahead of the May 1968 insurrection, '[u]nless and until [education] goes beyond the classroom, until and unless it goes beyond the college, the school, the university, it will remain powerless.'

Here, the hopelessness of the institution reflects the extension of the category of labour into all of social life and to all social beings (Marx 1844/1974). It reflects our misrecognition as humans inside the institutions of capital. As Fraser (2013: 177) argues, 'misrecognition is an institutionalized social relation, not a psychological state.' We do not need: a more resilient or mindful university structure; institutional forms that reinforce private property, the division of labour, commodity exchange and the market; or, forms that deny the lives of those who care for others, have specific needs, are forced into less privileged roles, or lack hegemonic identity-markers. We need institutions that enable those singular individuals to be treated equally, rather than be given equality of opportunity in a system that continually works against some bodies. In this, we insist on emancipation within a new community of unity-through-difference that lies beyond the institutions of labour.

Cultures of antipathy

Our emancipation must face down the pathological inertia of the hopeless University, as a re-working of the world in common. It must ask whether: first, it is possible for this to emerge from inside the hopeless University; and second, if those experiencing differential levels of privilege, exploitation and marginalisation

can work publicly, democratically and radically, in order to abolish the fetish of University labour. Such modes of working generate cultures for an expanded realm of freedom (practical autonomy), and a reduced realm of imposed necessity (unnecessary production, consumption and accumulation) at the level of society (Gorz 1982; Marx 1894/1991).

It is possible to develop thinking here around the enmeshed realities of social and environmental crises, potentially through a cultural turn to social ecology (Bookchin 1995; Wright and Hill 2020) or queer ecology (Jeppesen 2010; Sbicca 2012). These offer cultural framings that work against binaries, and open-out deeper, entangled interconnections between individuals, communities, places, identities, data, infrastructures, histories, activities. Eco-queer analyses challenge the transhistorical unreality of the capitalist institution, as represented by high-performing, white men with access to flows of privilege, resources and networks of power. Such courageous approaches refuse to perpetuate binaries as somehow natural, rather than emerging from material, human practices, cultures and ways of interpreting the world. They highlight the ability to interconnect the marginalisation of *both* identities *and* the natural world, to demonstrate how the institutions of the global North continue to exploit, expropriate and extract across a range of physical and mental terrains.

Multiple paths are made visible, as we question and then walk away from hegemonic institutions, by refusing their enforced estrangement of identities, individuals, groups, and disciplines, and their reproduction of a toxic, competitive culture. An eco-queer reframing challenges the idea that white, male, cis-gender, heteronormative positions are natural, and must coalesce as the performative particularity to which everyone must aspire. This enables fractures to be opened up around how bodies are positioned culturally inside capitalist institutions, and how they are placed in

relation to what is natural in terms of value production and social reproduction.

In these challenges to the flows of power that maintain alienating structures, it becomes possible to refuse the systemic invocation to become a pure form of human capital or moment of value creation. Such invocations erupt from the diseased demands of the system for its own reproduction, at the expense of the complexity and messiness of the world (Shotwell 2016). The competitive, performative, institutional *peloton* denies the validity of complex and messy cultures. It shames those who cannot engage in purifying forms of production, measured against the most high-performing individuals. Instead, it generates a focus upon upskilling, resilience training, mindfulness and appraisal, which normalise self-harm through culturally-acceptable overwork and reproduction of systemic privilege, inside what is termed the institutional family.

For Shotwell (ibid.), we are better able to address crises through cultures that enable self-forgiveness and self-love, alongside a collective recognition that personal purity is an impossibility. The negation of pathological cultures is a process of dissolving boundaries, predicated upon ways of seeing the world that are many-sided. Cultures that reflect intercommunal, intergenerational and intersectional realities have a solvent effect on these exclusive positions. As a result, they dissolve the hard boundaries between beings, which deny the other, and disable the potential for becoming. This dissolution is a mode of decomposing boundaries, and thereby bringing the dominant beings of whiteness into relation with its opposites, or what Mbembe (2017: 30) calls the 'Black consciousness of Blackness'.

This process denies the validity of historical, material privilege accrued inside universities, and realised in the static identities of high-performing individuals. It demands that those identities

are made as fragile as all others, and are brought together in an entangled communion that pushes beyond what Shotwell (2016: 195) calls a 'purity politics of despair'. The idea is not to generate blueprints for managing crises, to cling to the unreal imaginaries of solutions-focused cultures, or to defend established standards of living that are grounded in apparently transhistorical norms. Instead, revealing the contours of fragility fractures *The End of History*, by refusing the cultural perspective of the institutions of the global North, which simply offer a 'vast bureaucratic apparatus for the creation and maintenance of hopelessness' (Dinerstein 2015: 82).

Here, we must wrestle with the ways in which hope is entangled with hopelessness, in particular where the former represents the energy and light of life. The argument here has pushed back against hope's representation as a disabling lamentation, or as a means of enduring suffering and enabling penance. It is important to recognise how the principle of hope has been used to orient identities, bodies, and collectivities through struggle, and that it might stand critically, against naïve optimism. Yet, in arguing against the hopeless University, the courage and faith to question and walk is not situated inside a culture of hope, through which the structures of capitalist exploitation might be overcome. Instead, it is situated inside a contempt for the hopelessness of what-is, as a motivating power, grounded in empathy for the situations of powerlessness and helplessness enacted by the pathological cultures that structure our existences.

Acts of self-care and self-love in the here-and-now place hope and hopelessness in dialectical relation. They place the hopeless University against our yearning for meaningful intellectual work, pushing towards a new way of knowing the world that negates what-is. This is an ongoing refusal to be annihilated, and a yearning for the not-yet. It is not the mediation of alienation through a

desire or expectation for something to happen, and, as such, it shapes an open, insistent, direct demand in this moment. This is important because the system mobilises particular flavours of hope for a better life, in order to maintain its structural integrity. The singular experiences of hopelessness generated inside those structures need to be brought into relation with the particular imaginaries that generate hope inside capitalism, in order to refuse value-driven hopefulness as a universal referent.

In the universities of the global North hope lacks urgency, and is predicated upon wishing, rather than struggling for subjectivity through new modes of doing (Bloch 1996; Dinerstein 2015). Too often the University becomes a site of uncritical hope, for instance, in: reformist returns to the public University, and for public funding and regulation; more radical cries for a co-operative University where they are disconnected from capital's social metabolic control; or, calls for a renewed belief in the expertise of the University, which reproduces its separations from authentic social needs. These imaginaries remain estranged from other social and environmental struggles, or unable to see beyond reified knowledge production in addressing them. They align with pathologies of hopelessness, and as such they articulate what Amsler (2015) highlights as Bloch's (1996: 148) 'world without Front', because they cannot escape the cultural logics of hegemonic structures. They collapse towards mitigation of the anxious and depressive symptoms of those cultures, which are then unable to comprehend ways of knowing, doing and being beyond alienation.

Here, Amsler (2015) pushes us to contemplate how we enable ontologies beyond a particular purity, and beyond its dominating logics, to connect with the *Not-Yet-Being*, as an open entanglement with other dimensions, spaces, ideas, materials and relationships. We might see this in terms of Hegel's (2018) being-for-itself, through which our open entanglements demonstrate

our yearnings for self-sufficiency as our creative possibility. This is Marx's commitment to human self-emancipation, realised as the denial of anxiety-inducing cultures that demand purity of performance. It is a movement of self-knowing-as-negation, in its positive integration of theory and practice, and its negative movement away from crude individualism. This carries the latter forward to recognise the singular experience emerging socially in relation to the other, as 'the universal plurality of singular individuality' (ibid.: 280 S480).

The hopeless University insists upon cultures that impose particular content, characteristics, practices, modes of representation and external validation upon individuals, who are then denied self-knowledge because they are abstracted and always mediated (ibid.: 343 S590). A negative movement away from this opens-up the other of the University or the not-University. This does not seek to determine the contours of a better University as an abstract blueprint or utopian position, or to place the symbolic being of the institution in relation to nothing as its void. Rather, as we bring the alienating institution into relation with its negative, we can feel that for which we yearn, as moments of '*sublated immediacy*', which enables '*pure knowing and willing*' (ibid.: 346 S594, *emphasis* in original).

Negativity questions what is, and offers a path beyond, and this enables an immediate self-reference (Hegel 2010: 110). Such immediate self-reference is impossible inside the hopeless University, precisely because it denies self-determination and instead pushes its colonisation of its labourers' bodies, identities or beings in particular ways. For example, its cultures of equality and diversity present a fragmented view of the other, constructed inside and against the workplace, such that the development of any sense of self or being-in-itself is conditioned or mediated in stunted ways. More complex forms of self-determination, self-

reference or self-actualisation need spaces that are defined by understanding the other, and not through competition with them over satisfaction, impact and excellence. Absolute negativity posits the self as determined *both* in relation to the institution that works to negate their autonomy, *and* also in relation to other beings, in order to understand what is reflected back about themselves as an open critique. The movement is for a fuller understanding of one's own humanity as a new mode of becoming.

This matters because institutional cultures reproduce perceptions of powerlessness in the face of crises, beyond the reproduction of disciplinary separations and the commodification of particular, deterministic forms of knowledge. Instead, the process of unfolding accepts the differentiation upon which the world becomes, as the ground of individual and collective self-determination. Rather than being stuck in the search for academic privilege and status, individuals are able to analyse dialectically the quality of intellectual work, the role of others in the University *peloton*, the limits imposed by metrics, and the hegemonic realities of settler-colonial and racial capitalist imaginaries. A one-sided analysis of these reproduces 'incomplete configurations of negation in being' (ibid.: 387), and either lock us into particular, competitive modes or into responses against the symptoms of distress.

Our work is to generate cultures of collective worker-activism from within universities, which can then breach their forms by denying the validity of the content they reproduce, for instance, through performance management measures imposed as equal standards. This requires common cause to erupt at the intersection of the personal and the political. Where the Self is reflected in the institution and the other, it reacts to difference by connecting/ collaborating or in repulsion/competing. Reactions offer spaces for understanding and venturing beyond our current places and paths, especially where they are stuck reproducing inequality and

alienation. However, these ask that those of us with privilege are able 'to reach down into that deep place of knowledge [...] and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives here. See whose face it wears' (Lorde 2015: 21).

In appearance, this is naïve and grounded in hope, especially given *both* the legacies of privilege that erupt through racial capitalism, *and* the lack of reflexivity in settler-colonial societies governed by denial. The intersecting systems of oppression visited upon, for instance, black women, demand a political movement at the level of society, which prioritises communal transformation from the paths of feminism and antiracism (The Combahee River Collective 1982). Here, Morgan's (quoted in *ibid*: 22) withering conclusion was that 'I haven't the faintest notion what possible revolutionary role white heterosexual men could fulfil, since they are the very embodiment of reactionary-vested-interest-power.' Yet, there is a cultural imperative for those at the polar opposite of black women's experiences of the institution, namely white men in professorial roles, to focus upon allyship through consciousness-raising, not as a means of levelling-up, but of transcendence. Negating the hopeless University requires that the pathologies of such vested-interests wither away through the actions of those who benefit from them, working with those who are forced to suffer them.

In highly-competitive environments it is difficult to see how withering away may be enacted. As a result, the primary space of agency remains the classroom, through which a prefigurative, anti-oppressive practice can give space to breathe through participative, horizontal action. Such spaces are important in defining the values needed for a more liveable, collective existence. For some, this is a moment of social dreaming, imagining, yearning and healing. Yearning might usefully be turned against the system, through a fuller engagement with decolonial, feminist, queer and anti-

ableist critiques, in order to open-out: the content of struggle in the classroom, the symposium, and the team meeting; the labour movement to discussions of its own abolition; the potential for militant refusal to engage in ranking exercises and performance management; and, the possibility for liberating curricula, content, skills, technologies, and time from the University, into wider society.

Yearning maintains a constant focus upon what is the best collective outcome in this moment. It contains an awareness of what-is (both positive and negative), rather than hoping for the not-yet. This is a process of individuation that uncovers the individual's 'splits, projections, dissociations and repressions so that [they] have some understanding of [their] strengths and weaknesses and a clear idea of what gifts [they] may legitimately offer up to others' (Crawford 2019). Rather than individualism, this is self-determination enabled through cultures of reflexivity as mutual, compassionate obligation. It rejects cultures that estrange and abstract people from each other and their environment, and deform intellectual work. Instead, yearning pushes for a many-sided movement of empirical (singular), critical (particular), and speculative (universal) thinking (Dunayevskaya 1983), which enables cultures that posit self-determination and negate our antipathy to the University.

Practices of antipathy

The recovery of history is the development of sensuous material practices, as *both* a more authentic connection to doing in the world *and* a refusal of estranged labour. It enables a richer self-determination or being-for-itself. In thinking about a movement away from individualism and towards individuation, the development of such practices rejects the ongoing impulse to search for the valorisation of commodified intellectual work as

the University's socially-useful activity. Its activities reveal how it is imagined as a singular entity, in answer to the question, what should this University be? However, they also connect it to a wider question about the symbolism of universities as a particular group of capitalist institutions, in answer to the question, what should universities be? Relating these particularities to the universal terrain of value amplifies hopelessness, because the University is simply one node in associations that enact capital's social metabolic control.

Inevitable responses focus upon the conditions of labour with struggles over time, workload, affective labour, reward and recognition, and so on, but the metabolism of the institution, driven by anxiety, maintains a focus upon competitive, entrepreneurial activity. Antipathy towards such practices requires work that pushes against capital's deformation of being, and against estrangement and objectification. This also undermines capital's hold over autonomous activity, and registers the many-sided development of the social individual as a new form for collective, mutual understanding.

A critical practice is the revelation of abjection, and the ways in which our administration, studying, teaching, examining, and researching, experienced differentially, are increasingly miserable activities. At the same time, there is a need to connect these lived experiences to the concrete reality that alternative, autonomous educational horizons are possible, where bodies, emotions, histories, places are connected and valued on human rather than inhuman terms (Motta 2018). The creation of these zones, grounded spatially and temporally, is a struggle to braid individuation and communisation, as a means of putting to an end the mediations which dominate and disfigure society, and that amplify crises (Endnotes 2010).

Such braiding is a practical, dialectical unfolding of the self-in-

community, and is the content of history as the re-imagining of the social individual. The pandemic has made clear that the logic of capital's response to crisis is to maintain its social metabolic control through annihilation or by ignoring. It is only by a social transformation, which stitches the individual and communal into a wider terrain of communisation, that crises might enable a new way of living (ibid.). This moves through an authentic realisation of how the capitalist content of society, and the institutional forms it takes, ruin us through a one-sided, estranged, objectified realisation of individualism (Camatte 1998). It then moves through an authentic realisation that a many-sided subjectivity is possible, which is not a fetishized ontology of *the* revolutionary identity. Instead, the need is for socially-useful practices that respect how the alienating reality of capitalist social relations are experienced differentially and will be removed differentially.

As a result, braiding individuation and communisation makes psychological demands of us, and especially of those with privilege. Expanding a many-sided knowing and being-for-itself or consciousness, requires that we internalise the reflected being of the other and the humanity of their truths, griefs and reconciliations. Without this, we are unable to undermine capital's content and look for new social forms for our practices (Théorie Communiste 2012). Without practices that centre the relationship between self and other, or being and nothing, work inside institutions like the University cannot develop any meaning beyond the reproduction of alienated labour-power.

It is more useful to focus upon practices that connect the lived experiences of the other to one's own self, through curriculum activities, militant research, activist public engagement, and the liberation of knowing into society, with a focus upon re-animating connections across the composition of University workers as a class of labourers. Such labourers do not work as a homogenous class,

but in the return of history, the visibility of dehumanisation, overwork, marginalisation, vilification, exploitation and expropriation are clear. Widening the contradictions of the capital-relation, in particular in the abject realities of lives that are externally mediated, means that we highlight how our identities have been constituted by value, as those identities constitute value through commodification (Friends of the Classless Society 2015). Transcendence reflects practices that refuse this mutual, asymmetrical constitution.

Marx and Engels (1846/1998) argued that those who stand in relation to nothing, and whose very being is threatened systemically with daily annihilation, would not simply seize control, but rather abolish themselves and in the process the mediations that constitute them. In this, humans are lifted beyond private property, the division of labour, commodity exchange and the market, precisely where they refuse to internalise the commodity or to commodify their knowledge, skills and capabilities. It is not enough that this is achieved institutionally or at the level of a particular sector, the alienated self and community must be abolished through social struggle, which seeks practices that transcend identification and organisation.

Inside the University this is not institutional reform. Rather, it is the abolition of University labour. It is not the hopeless, defensive struggles that lack cohesion and solidarity across fragments of the class of University workers. These fragments are diffuse, segmented, fragmented, commodified and corporately-parasitised. However, they share common, categorical points of convergence that might be usefully amplified through mutual actions. Mutuality is crucial here, in building trust and then opening-up a recognition of the other, rather than of the self in

relation to the capitalist institution. It shows the irreconcilability of the self and the hopeless University, and thereby widens the space for non-market practices and relations. It is the work of expanding the human archive beyond what is deemed particularly valuable, and making richer, many-sided interconnections within it.

The University cannot be transformed through the replacement of the archive of the high-performing, white man, whose privilege is based upon particular logics of intellectual and social reproduction, with that of another particular social subject. In an expanded, historically-rich archive, privileged and status-driven labour is de-valued where those who work in the University transform themselves as social rather than intellectual individuals. In the process they abolish the form and content of their determination, and the social metabolism that depends upon such self-determination lacks the energy to reproduce itself and is ruptured. The widening of non-market practices and relations is a qualitative shift that negates the content and form *both* of singular identities *and* of the structures and cultures that shape them.

It is not possible to define the exact practices that shape a blueprint for transformation. This reproduces capital's psychological control, rooted in the management of risk and the control of the world. Yet, the administrative, technical, classroom-based, research-engaged and public engagement-focused activities of the institution give countless opportunities for deepening a critique of hegemonic forms of privilege and power that dehumanise intellectual work at *The End of History*. Such deepening occurs in everyday activities that develop new relations and new mirrors, which themselves enable new ways of being to be constituted individually and socially. Rather than reproducing productivity, entrepreneurship and impact, excellence and student satisfaction, the point is to deny energy to the system in this moment, and thereby undermine

its materiality.

This constitutes a process of decomposing capitalist social relations, and the institutions, cultures, practices and identities upon which they depend. The widening of the space for individuation, communisation and non-market relations develops an alternative, mycorrhizal metabolism. By decaying systemic connections to alienated labour, it is possible to recycle the nutrients of an abject system, in terms of its humane values, histories, relations, technologies and infrastructures, and places. Decay and recycling are the realisation of the potential energy released by spontaneous struggles at the intersection of crises, which rupture what-is. Here, widening the horizon of struggle is no revolutionary programme, rather it forms an emerging process of sublation that communises, precisely because it reveals to people their relations to one another and the world. As Marx (1843) argued, elevating all struggles everywhere, to the point where the world can understand and internalise why it is struggling, underpins transformation, *both* as an immediate celebration of unity-in-difference, *and* the first step on a path towards a lifeworld of non-identity and negativity (Adorno 1966).

The ability to generate mutuality from everyday actions works against what Mignolo and Walsh (2018: 17) call, 'the colonial matrix of power', and '*for* the possibilities of an otherwise.' This is the struggle to think against the grain of the onto-epistemological power of the global North, and for living and knowing in order to change the settler-colonial and racial capitalist logics of the world (ibid.). Decoloniality practices the decomposition of performance management, individuation, measurement and quantity, which leave us vulnerable and powerless. It is a dialectical process that works to celebrate the

singularity of life and deny capital's totalising discourses. It centres and celebrates living as practicing knowing, doing and being-for-itself, by revealing a multitude of paths that take us beyond value.

The place of intellectual work at the end of The End of History

Can University workers rediscover their ability to make history as a social practice? This means the return of intellectual work to the bodies of those workers alongside its communal diffusion, rather than its estrangement and commodification. The body is central in the place of intellectual work. Universities sort, place and measure bodies using particular qualitative measures, which scrub the singular identities of the worker, in order to reinforce modes of performance that are palatable. They impose modes of dressage upon bodies, by raising questions about academic conduct, dress codes, online engagement, and on and on, which compels bodies to line up in particular ways. This reinforces the internalisation of particular practices that morph and distort identities. As intellectual work is cognitively-framed, it is managed at a deep, personal level, through the denial of its embodied and emotional histories.

For certain bodies this is amplified because dominant interpretations about markers of identity catalyse racial battle fatigue, false and double consciousness, and fugitive states. Internalising performing and conforming in appropriate ways denies a fuller sense of knowing the self, acting authentically, and then being-for-itself. It refuses certain bodies the opportunity to engage in meaningful becoming, because of the power of the (white, male, straight, able) other that comes to dominate existences. Uncovering this is important, precisely because the reproduction of institutional forms that catalyse pathological cultures and methodological practices denies authentic human becoming, and maintains a system of exploitation, expropriation

and extraction. The denial of the humanity of others inside capitalist institutions, replicates the immanence of whiteness as the content of the commodity-form, and damages existence, being and becoming for all.

The trauma of denials and scarring has been amplified at the intersection of financial and epidemiological crises, and has generated questions around the idea and ideals of University work. For what is the University a symbol? Is it possible to refuse its transhistorical imaginary from within? How might we disentangle value from values in our intellectual work? How might we then decompose *what-is*, in order to recycle our intellectuality and realise the *not-yet* as the *always-already*? If the struggle is against the University's demand that we are one-sided, human capital, realised in its forms, pathologies and methodologies, what forms, cultures and practices do we need to be otherwise?

Moten and Harney (2013) ask us to think about these kinds of questions in relation to the line between abolition and exodus. They question how we might move from antagonism, and to consider the paths we might make ourselves. This is the decomposing of those ways of being, acting and knowing the world that are governed by the commodity form. It is the ongoing recycling of our intellectuality as a recognised nutrient inside our own bodies, to be mixed with our psychologies, emotions, communities, histories, ancestors and places. We walk by questioning our paths beyond our commodified being-in-itself, alongside the markers attributed to us or that we take upon ourselves, inside a system of alienation.

Such a continual unfolding of becoming, through which we see what is entangled, and then disentangle possibility by decomposing and recycling or braiding anew is the first step.

It is necessarily work upon the self, in order to situate one's own being, knowing and doing, whether as a student, a librarian, a technician, a course administrator, a precarious academic, or a professor, in relation to the other. This accepts the complexity of being, and a re-emergence of its many-sided nature against the denials of the University-as-is, which reinforces systemic injustice. This work also refuses to reproduce our labouring roles as the complete content of our lives, framed *either* as an alleged labour of love, *or* as a hustle, in which individuals are always on the make (Smyth and Hattam 2000).

A question is then, do we push for public or co-operative universities, or declare that 'We are the University' as a transitional step? Or does this simply reinforce hopelessness through a hope that those with power might hear and act for us? Likewise, do engagements in institutional reform projects, for instance around decolonising, simply enable the institutional structuration of activism? In addressing these questions, do we seek refuge: in cynicism and communities of cynics; in exodus and quitting the Academy; in undertaking a fugitive existence; or in complicity and co-option? Is it possible to create lines of non-co-operation around which struggle might emerge, rather than placing the onus upon estranged individuals to act?

In this, we run into the material reality of how to do this work of refusal and also put food on the table and pay the rent. How do we do this work inside structures and systems of exploitation that are hegemonic? Yet, we are doing this work in all sorts of ways: in taking care of ourselves and asking about each other; in work for the common good in communities; in the struggle over conditions of work; in raising conversations around inequality and injustice; in the humanity of our activity; and, in saying *no*. Underpinning the quantity of these singular responses to particular, dominating, qualitative codes, the contradictions of the University might

establish directional demands beyond institutional rehabilitation. Such demands might usefully connect individual trauma and alienation to the realisation of new paths, which explicitly grow mycorrhizal networks that undermine capital.

This appears idealistic given capital's nimble-footed responses to crises as a means of maintaining the mass and rate of profit (Marx 1867/2004), especially where that appearance emerges in relation to an essence that cannot see beyond value. Yet, understanding the ways in which the University is hopelessly entangled with the contradictions of capital is central to our questioning of what might yet be. These contradictions pivot around how wealth is defined in capitalist society and how the commodity form comes to dominate life. The University's knowledge economy is entangled with processes of knowing the world, developing skills and crafts, developing technical and technological understanding, relationships to other people, material production, cultural forms and the natural world. Alternative ways of knowing the world, and therefore of doing and being in it, are *always-already* contained inside the search for surplus generated by the fetishisation of the commodity.

As the contradictions of the commodity form are uncovered, we might begin the process of remembering. Remembering is a deeply human process, and in this recovering of our humanity, we are better placed to empathise with the humanity of others. Thus, in the exchange-value of our University activities, we might remember or question how socially-useful they are. We might begin to question how we quantify and measure those activities, the cultures that sustain them, and the inhuman ways in which they are mediated. This generates the potential for refusing institutional and state-based governance and regulation of intellectual work in the name of value.

Refusals are predicated upon a different conception of the socially-necessary uses of our time, and how to build zones of freedom beyond capitalist institutions. The intersection of crises opens-out analyses of the strands of our activity that are socially-useless, in that they are unnecessary to human flourishing. This forces us to move beyond our engagement as anxious, ill, fugitive or dissonant employees, into a categorical analysis of the relationship between capital and labour, and in particular the former's desire to annihilate the latter. In this, we come to an understanding of the realities of managerialism and the treadmill of competition as a means to generate solutions to social problems that have no meaning in a world of almost infinite many-sidedness. This forces us to contest the processes that reproduce our essentialism about the world, and the dominant narratives we impose upon difference.

Such unfolding reflects into its other, as alternative, humanist paths for becoming. These paths transcend how vulnerability and helplessness exacerbate hopelessness in the academic *peloton*, because they work to address the loss of autonomy, the desperate hunt to maintain or gain status, and the needless separation of institutions from the places and communities in which they sit. They work against the imperative to measure-up, which infects the ability of University worker to reproduce themselves authentically. In this return of history, we reveal paths away from the inhuman and unnatural symbolism and imaginaries imposed by capital and its institutions. This is not to essentialise what it is to be human or natural, rather to emphasise that capital has enforced an existence, actuality and being that are toxic and life-limiting.

As such, our first step is also a process of grieving the University-as-is and our harming entanglements with it, which deny mutuality, reciprocity and solidarity. Grieving matters because, as the Out of the Woods' Collective (2019) argue, there is no way out but through, and this requires that we process 'our material

well-being'. In sitting with our grief, we are able to compost it in ways that are useful, as a means towards material practice shaped by all the senses, and that is direct, rather than mediated. It integrates cognition and emotion, self and other, and theory and practice, as content for a new form of intellectual work, which is a struggle for widening the realm of autonomous activity and free time, at the level of society. This is grief that connects workplaces, communities and places of social reproduction, as the potential for renewal.

Accepting and composting grief, such that its nutrients might be recycled for other worlds, works with Harvey's (2014) ideas for political praxis. Here, there is the opportunity to refuse the fetishisation of the University, and to enable intellectual work in common. Such work is a means of amplifying mass intellectuality as a collective reintegration of knowing, doing and being for other worlds (Hall and Winn 2017). Thus, University workers must struggle for the direct provision of adequate education, rather than that which is mediated by the market and earnings potential. This must be connected to struggles for other social goods, like pensions, housing, food and welfare, as a means of undermining social exploitation and alienation. As Marx (1875/1970) argued, in this there is a struggle for equality rather than equality of opportunity, and over access to the social fund of goods, including education. A sense of economic power giving positionality and rights, for instance over access to market-based goods, needs to be refused. Instead, we must widen the space-times for narratives of communal rights, with a deep sense of connection to histories, places, ancestries, environments, emotions and bodies.

Here, a focus upon direct democracy between all individuals helps us to invert associations of capitals that deny humanity for-

value. Decomposing these associations offers a way of constructing ecosystems that can recycle the nutrients of social goods into local communities. Communication across communities, or communes, such that a commune of communes acts as the basis for such ecosystems, is pivotal in defining and meeting universal social needs. Universities and their infrastructures are central to this process, including in their decomposition and recycling. They have the ability to help in the diffusion of technological and organisational solutions for reducing the realm of necessity, for generalising access to the means of production, and for refusing the extractive relationship between humans and nature. This requires a significant cognitive and psychological movement amongst individuals and communities. However, in asking those communities to discuss what is necessary for their existence, and how might they live in a world facing the intersection of crises, it is life-affirming.

In this way, the question of how intellectual work can help in the process of becoming is always present. Through direct democracy and the ability of individuals to associate freely, rather than being mediated through the division of University labour, it becomes possible to ask whether individuals might self-determine in common, rather than through their one-sided role and access to intellectual resources. The development of being-for-itself in common respects unity-through-difference, such that the many-sided reality of one person's existence is brought into empathetic relations with that of another, and of nature. A humanism grounded in reciprocity, mutuality and solidarity emerges through the internalisation of our commonality, shaped by our difference. This enables a deeper dialogue around living with crises, which dissolves the boundaries between reified intellectual work in the University and the social reproduction that it is enabled by and estranged from.

This seems helplessly naïve against the reductionist, transhistorical symbolism of the hopeless University, as it is situated inside a constellation that sustains the expansive power of the universe of value. Against the powers that deny many-sided abundance and impose one-sided scarcity, how are people to live otherwise? Yet, we must take the first step, and refuse calls for an *a priori* blueprint that claims to predict the world. Alternatives cannot be concretely conceptualised from inside a system of alienation, but they can be worked through in practice (Marcuse 1969a). As Marcos (2002: 321) argued, '[a]ll final options are a trap.' As a result, there must be a deep questioning of the University-as-is, and the ways in which it reproduces systemic alienation, exploitation, expropriation and extraction. In this moment we question the purpose of intellectual work at the end of *The End of History*, as a social struggle for reintegrating: the self in relation to the other; intellectual work with the many-sided realities of our beings; philosophy with science; human needs and the environment; and, our institutions with our communal living.

As history returns, this is also a struggle for reintegrating hope and hopelessness, such that we can be courageous and faithful in articulating our yearnings. This is a yearning beyond the forms, pathologies and methodologies of University labour. It is for intellectual work in society, which takes self-determination as its content and thereby opens-out new forms that give everyone free access to human intellectuality: everything must be for everyone. As a deeply relational practice (Yazzie Burkhart 2004), its starting point cannot be reform of the University and its crisis-driven existence. Like our ignorance, the search for a cure merely prolongs our agony. Instead, we must speak and listen, question and make paths, guided by those 'who continue without hearing

the voices of the powerful and the indifferent' (Marcos 2002: 32).

The material production of new, plural histories and archives, written with care and compassion, describes the content of our beings at the intersection of crises. By sitting with hopelessness, we are able to discover that for which we yearn, grounded in the equality and dignity currently denied inside the hopeless University. In recognising that the University-as-is is antithetical to good living, we begin a qualitative leap that is grounded in struggle (Chuǎng 2019b). Our struggle is to understand our entanglements, estrangements, and relations, and thereby to realise our many-sidedness. Our truth is that we make the hopeless University, because we are the hopeless University. In moving beyond, our attention must be drawn to new modes of being and becoming, in which our lives are liberated from our toxic institutions. At the end of *The End of History*, we remember that these are practical problems to be addressed in the present. This is the real movement.

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“The hopeless University is a flag bearer for a collective life that is becoming more efficiently unsustainable.”

Faced by the realities and lived experiences of intersecting crises, the University has become hopeless, in two respects. First, it has become a place that has no socially-useful role beyond the reproduction of capital, and has become an anti-human project devoid of hope. Second, it is unable to respond meaningfully with crises that erupt from the contradictions of capital. Thus, in its maintenance of business-as-usual, the University remains shaped as a tactical response to these contradictions.

The Hopeless University examines the structures/forms, cultures/pathologies and activities/methodologies of the University, in order to question what kind of higher learning we yearn for and deserve. In looking at the ways in which the University represents our entangled, intellectual existences, Richard Hall asks whether we might compost the structures, cultures and activities that engender hopelessness and helplessness. Might other modes of intellectual work and higher learning be possible?

In addressing this question, individuals and communities are invited to consider the potential for reimagining intellectual work as a movement of sensuous human activity in the world, and as a refusal of its commodification. As widespread social struggles against capitalism are revealed, we are reminded of our ability to make history. Thus, we must discuss how to reimagine and recycle intellectual work in society. We must discuss how to compost *The Hopeless University* as an indignant movement of dignity.

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