

Sept. 15, 1980

Dear Jim and Peter:

I address you two, but of course this is meant for the whole youth, since they all will be most happy to find that their hatred of examinations is by no means personal, petty bourgeois subjectivism, much less as the know-it-all professors would explain it, pure laziness. No, no, no. Marx to the rescue, does something absolutely, fantastically brilliant by exposing examinations as not only related to bureaucraticization, but to the degradation of knowledge by imposing on it "a bureaucratic baptism." Listen to ~~the~~ Marx as he breaks with the political concept of the Prussian state by granting it a Hegelian conceptualization:

"The aims of the state transform themselves into the aims of the bureaux, or the aims of the bureaux into those of the state. The bureaucracy is a circle from which no one can escape. Its hierarchy is a hierarchy of knowledge...The examination is nothing other than the bureaucratic baptism of knowledge, the official recognition of the trans-substantiation of profane knowledge into sacred (it goes without saying that for every examination the examiner knows all)."

Except for the first sentence which I think would need too big an explanation and where it would not be obvious that bureaux is bureaucracy, and also because you would want to stick to attacking the bureaucracy of the colleges and academia, I would suggest that the quotation appear at the top of your next issue of From the Pen or whatever you use to create the new for the particular college you are attacking. By the top I mean the head of an article which should be most concrete, that is to say, it should say something like this: Now that we are all back in our schools from which we cannot escape, not because "legally" we are not free, but because the knowledge of the world we do seek is confined to such a hierarchy that it is necessary to uproot it. Therefore, we must have an alternative knowledge that is in no way separated from the actual world. Far from imitating our elders and trying to say that no one knows anything who has not passed an examination, we learn from the very ones who according to bourgeois standards "know nothing," but live a life so different from ourselves, so very oppressive, etc. etc. etc. (That is, at this point you should put in very specifically the facts of the poor, the Black, or whatever.) It is for this reason that we have chosen this magnificent quotation from Marx and first begin to understand why when he broke from bourgeois society and was asked why, when he is well-off, etc., he replied that "the root of mankind is man, and I cannot be free when others are enslaved."

Go to it!

Yours,

Kaya

* The quotation in the German is in MEW 1: 253. I'm sure the English is the same volume but the page number would have changed. It is in either the article on the critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right or somewhere in the holy family, the first more likely.

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