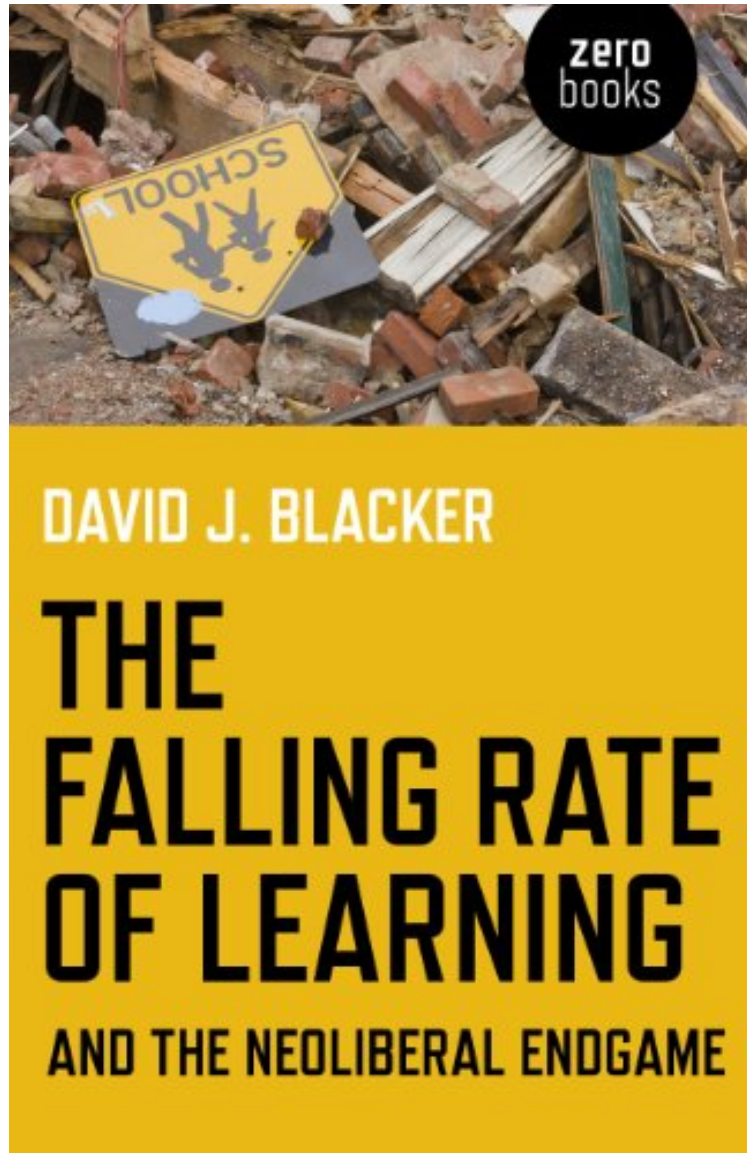


(Library ebook) The Falling Rate of Learning and the Neoliberal Endgame

The Falling Rate of Learning and the Neoliberal Endgame

David Blacker

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David Blacker : The Falling Rate of Learning and the Neoliberal Endgame before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Falling Rate of Learning and the Neoliberal Endgame:

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Very well thought out on education in the casino capitalist world. By Bill GonchI must say that this book was not exactly what I expected. In many ways it was better. Blacker begins with a discussion of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall (TPRF). The source of the argument is in chapter 13 of Capital (Marx). Blacker does a very good job explicating the theory. Although he mentions that TPRF is contested, I would have like to have seen him spend some time dealing with the counter arguments. Blacker

contextualizes the problem of TPRF in the context of neoliberal (casino) capitalism and the various crises we are seeing in the capitalist space. I think he sometimes remains too modest as insights extend far beyond Marx. Essentially the elite of capitalism have gotten themselves in a dilemma regarding where to go with Capitalism. To maintain the rate of profit they have grown accustomed to in increasingly short-lived booms, they really have to eliminate variable capital (labour). Of course to eliminate labour (via globalization, out sourcing, precarious employment, automation), you inherently eliminate the consumers that buy all the junk the global system can produce. I, for one, have realized I would rather be a creator than a consumer. So the goose has been killed, We live in this period of increasingly disposable people. Simultaneously, government support for the disposed people is withdrawn, as the elite demand increasing subsidy (bailouts, tax cuts, privatization, defence spending) just to stay elite. Blacker is much more clear headed than many in academe on the fact that the rise of education has historically been closely coupled to the needs of capital. Various forms of education have largely expanded at the rate that Capital needed workers trained in various ways. A large component of growth of the education system has been Capital externalizing its worker training expense. In the media we are currently confronted by waves of education institutions advertising whatever it is they do (in many cases diploma mills conducted via instructor free on-line courses) selling the promise of take our degree and you will get a good job. We simply know that is increasingly snake oil. On a side note, I am frequently confronted by ads in all media by a university that promises 'be what you want to be.' Socrates was indicted for corrupting the youth. Pass the hemlock, please. In three chapters, Blacker discusses specific instances of his thesis in the context of education. The three topics are student debt, student voice and the disassembly of university schooling. Blacker advances well constructed arguments. I found all of these three chapters very interesting. I must admit the chapter on student voice, which consists largely of an analysis of Clarence Thomas' concurrence in the case of *Morse v. Frederick*, seemed somewhat disjoint from the remainder of the book. Blacker makes a convincing argument here, but that argument does not seem to fit with the larger theses of the book. Perhaps I missed something. The final chapter, 'Fatalism, Pessimism, and Other Reasons for Hope' is positively (and acknowledgedly) Spinozan in pointing out ways forward. It makes the point that resistance is futile, but it really does not matter that direct resistance is futile. This is a tough book requiring some deep thought. It touches on a number of complex intellectual traditions, but does not assume the reader is a specialist in them. Strongly recommended. 17 of 18 people found the following review helpful. On the one percent's cruel politics of eliminationism

By Malvin "The Falling Rate of Learning" by David J. Blacker skillfully blends realism, passion and optimism on the decline of public education. Professor Blacker is a philosopher who has spent many years in academia studying the critical education issues of our time. This timely, enlightening and oddly inspirational book will interest everyone who wants to understand why public education is failing; and what to do about it. Professor Black assesses the economic conditions that have pressured public education. Professor Black applies Marx's theory about the tendency of the rate of profits to fall to explain how capitalism has lately come to be dominated by the financial sector. In this current, neoliberal phase of capitalism, Professor Black explains that finance rewards producers who successfully implement technology to automate their production systems and shed redundant workers. As competitors replicate these processes, profitability inevitably diminishes; but not before vulture financiers have succeeded in wringing out short-term, speculative gains on the backs of increasingly indebted consumers. Meanwhile, government officials have been coerced into bailing out the most reckless bankers, leaving fewer resources available for valuable public goods including education. Professor Blacker asserts that since the public education system as we know it was the product of an earlier stage of capitalism - where Fordist production processes had once upon a time depended on a reasonably literate, mass labor force - it should be no surprise that the system is now in crisis. As workers have become less and less relevant to the attainment of corporate profits, the value of mass public education has been lost...save for its marginal utility as a site for cultural indoctrination, discipline and surveillance. The author goes on to discuss how predatory capitalists aim to extract value from the tattered system that remains through charter schools, private schools, cooptation of university research programs and of course, the massive financing of student debt. Professor Black alerts us to the neoliberal endgame which, in his estimation, seems bent on the elimination of public institutions and unwanted, unproductive people. Since public education is a product of capitalism, Professor Black believes it would be far more productive for reformers to direct their attentions on the malignant, external forces that threaten the system rather than attempt to reform public education from within. Although people of good will should always do their best, Professor Black thinks we should mentally prepare ourselves for a tomorrow that might be far worse than today. As neoliberalism systematically degrades the planet, we should not be surprised if widespread food, water and energy scarcity occurs much sooner than expected. In these dismal conditions, Professor Black believes that public education might completely collapse. Notwithstanding the possibility of some unforeseen circumstances that might alter the course of history, the author contends that we must begin to accept our fate with a dose of stoicism and find the courage to challenge the 1 percent's cruel politics of eliminationism. I highly recommend this outstanding book to everyone. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A wonderful convergence around a critically important issue.

By Customer I am not sure what conscious or unconscious criterion other people use to justify excitement about a book or anything else for that matter. Until I picked up *The Falling Rate of Learning and the Neoliberal Endgame*, I was unaware of what is now my own personal

favorite criterion. Imagine the familiar meme of Six Degrees of Freedom but applied to ideas instead of people--one rarely connects with those people three or more degrees of freedom away. Blacker has managed to take one of the most important (perhaps the most important) issue of our times and brings together a tremendous number of ideas, many three (or more) degrees away from the nexus. Never have I read a work that cited more works I had read previously or knew I needed to read (Taleb, Klein, Giroux, Hayes, Kurzweil, Berlin, Minsky, Ariely, Zizek, Irvine, SCOTUS to name a few, along with the necessary philosophical retinue.) I found Blacker's writing style addictive and as one would imagine of such a work, it must be digested slowly, carefully and with relish. If you are looking for easy reading, look elsewhere. If you seek the above, look no further.

The current neoliberal mutation of capitalism has evolved beyond the days when the wholesale exploitation of labor underwrote the world system's expansion. While "normal" business profits plummet and theft-by-finance rises, capitalism now shifts into a mode of elimination that targets most of us--along with our environment--as waste products awaiting managed disposal. The education system is caught in the throes of this eliminationism across a number of fronts: crushing student debt, impatience with student expression, the looting of vestigial public institutions and, finally, as coup de grace, an abandonment of the historic ideal of universal education. "Education reform" is powerless against eliminationism and is at best a mirage that diverts oppositional energies. The very idea of education activism becomes a comforting fiction. Educational institutions are strapped into the eliminationist project--the neoliberal endgame--in a way that admits no escape, even despite the heroic gestures of a few. The school systems that capitalism has built and directed over the last two centuries are fated to go down with the ship. It is rational therefore for educators to cultivate a certain pessimism. Should we despair? Why, yes, we should--but cheerfully, as confronting elimination, mortality, is after all our common fate. There is nothing and everything to do in order to prepare.

A "brilliant, searing broadside" -South China Morning Post "The Falling Rate of Learning ought to be read as a warning of things to come." - 31 (UK) "Blacker is a sharp and forceful writer, giving his analysis something of the vividness and urgency of an Old Testament prophet delivering warnings that nobody really wants to hear." -Inside Higher Ed "This is a punchy, polemical book and good knockabout stuff... This is a book that is not only unsparing but a rousing call to arms." -Times Higher Education "David Blacker has written a superb book in which matters of education, agency, economic justice and collective struggle come alive in both a language of critique and possibility." -Henry A. Giroux, author, *America's Education Deficit and the War on Youth*, MacMaster University "Invigorating pessimism" -Mark Fisher, author, *Capitalist Realism*, University of East London "David Blacker's book should be required reading for everyone marching circles in schools and universities." -Douglas Lain, author, *Billy Moon* and host of the *Diet Soap Podcast* "The notion that widespread educational attainment is the key to widespread prosperity has long been a pillar of the dominant ideology. David Blacker's central--and centrally important--insight is that the Great Recession has made this notion (which was always dubious) hopelessly anachronistic..." -Andrew Kliman, author, *The Failure of Capitalist Production*, Professor of Economics, Pace University "David Blacker provides a mordantly clear-eyed assessment of our predicament." -Christopher Phillips, author, *Socrates Cafe*, University of Pennsylvania