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Revitalizing Higher Education and the Commitment to the Public Good: A Literature Review

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### Author

Letizia, Angelo

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American research universities, colleges, and community colleges are central to the development of the public good in the United States. One of the main purposes of higher education is to foster a vibrant public good, which includes increased democratic participation, equality before the law, positive social transformation as well as a healthy economy that benefits all (Marginson, 2007; Pusser, 2006). As elucidated by many authors including Calhoun (1998), Mansbridge (1998), as well as Habermas (1991), the public good refers to the access and distribution of public programs such as, education, healthcare, and civil liberties.<sup>1</sup> Other indicators of an actualized public good include: a fair legal system, societal participation in the development of public policy, and access to socioeconomic mobility (Marginson, 2007; Pusser, 2006). Higher education institutions support all of the aforementioned components of the public good, and have traditionally been regarded by policymakers to create a vibrant vision of the public good in their states (Zumeta, 2011).

However, in the last three decades, higher education institutions have experienced a seismic shift in the ways they are expected to contribute to the public good. One pervasive example of this shift is the emergence of performance based funding policies (McLendon & Hearn, 2013). Currently, these policies require that institutions meet specified targets, namely graduation rates, or risk losing base funding (McLendon & Hearn, 2013). Performance based funding does not recognize any of the non-monetary or non-economic benefits of higher education, such as fostering tolerance and civic behavior. Along with other similar policies, it is rooted in wider theories of neoliberalism that are at the heart of a shift in public higher education institutions (Giroux, 2011; Malott, Hill & Banefield, 2013). While a multifaceted theory, neoliberalism essentially holds that market mechanisms are the most efficient and surest means to distribute goods and services, including traditional public services such as education. For neoliberals, government intervention, in the form of taxation, protection of workers and public assistance, are all rejected because these interventions are thought to disturb the equilibrium of markets (Friedman & Friedman, 1981). Neoliberals argue that the market is the most efficient system for transmitting information (i.e., supply and demand) and offers the most choices to individuals due to competition (Plant, 2010). Beginning during the economic recession of the late 1970s, public services, such as higher education (which had been heavily subsidized by the government through taxation), were cast by many policymakers and neoliberal advocates as grossly inefficient (Malott, 2014). Specifically, higher education institutions and K-12 schools were charged with not meeting the economic demands of the state and the nation. Critics of public education argued that public institutions had no incentive to innovate, or update their services or delivery systems, since an institution's funding was

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<sup>1</sup> Civil liberties and freedoms include the freedom of speech, freedom of press, the freedom of assembly and due process of law (McMahon, 2009).

guaranteed (Alexander, 2000). State funding began to drastically decrease in part due to pervasive lobbying by businesses and other neoliberal advocates. Consequently, measures (i.e., standardized testing, performance based funding, etc.) were enacted to ensure schools and higher education institutions were being held accountable to market needs. As a result, the ability of higher education institutions to promote a vision of the public good that not only includes market interests, but more importantly, social and civic concerns, is being severely threatened by neoliberalism. Neoliberalism should not be perceived as a monolithic; it is a continual and ongoing phenomena within different contexts. However, the aforementioned characteristics of neoliberalism have greatly influenced higher education policy over the last four decades.

In an effort to affirm the purpose of a postsecondary education and further promote a vibrant public good, critical scholars and educators must resist and challenge not only the effects of neoliberalism, such as the continual loss of state funding, but the foundation of neoliberalism itself. The loss of state funds is only a symptom of neoliberalism and an effect of neoliberal dominance in state and federal policymaking. The foundation of neoliberalism is the assumption that the most basic unit of society is the rational, choice making individual. In the most extreme sense, neoliberals argue that society is a convenient fiction (Harvey, 2005). Social relations between individuals are cast as impediments to profit accumulation. It is this idea that undergirds the belief that markets are the best transmitters of information because the market offers choices to individuals through competition (Malott, Hill & Banefield, 2013). Yet, without a true conception of social relations between individuals, there can be no authentic public good (Kohn, 1990). Higher education must support and revitalize these bonds in American society. The notion of the I-thou can help re-conceptualize and strengthen the concept of the public good and how higher education institutions contribute to it. Instead of adopting the neoliberal view that society is composed of rational, choice making, self-interested individuals, a more communal and social foundation is needed as state and national boundaries begin to recede. The I-thou theoretical framework can be employed to strengthen the foundation of the public good and to guide its conceptualization within higher education. This foundation is not based on the rational, profit-maximizing individual, rather on the *relationships* between individuals.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Social relationships are defined as the strength of the bonds between individuals. These bonds can be conceived as altruistic, prosocial, or as social capital. Altruism is defined as when one human being aids another with no expectation of reward. Prosocial behavior is when one human being aids another for any reason (Kohn, 1990). Social capital refers to trust and cooperation between individuals (Putnam, 2000). Higher levels of social trust lead to stronger civic institutions as well as lower incarceration rates among many other benefits (McMahon, 2009; Putnam, 2000).

This paper calls for a new, global conception of the public good, informed by the I-thou theoretical framework. It is made up of a literature review and, per Maxwell's (2006) conceptualization, puts multiple academic works in conversation with one another. The objective is to bring forth relevant pieces of literature and build upon the I-thou framework. As such, and following Maxwell's (2006) guidelines, the literature will be synthesized and interpreted to construct the I-thou theoretical framework for the advancement of the public good within higher education. Maxwell (2006) also urges for literature reviews to survey relevant literature *outside* of the area or topics at hand, and to incorporate new ideas and perspectives. This literature review follows that advice and cites the work of the nineteenth century German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach, primarily his formulation of the I-thou theory, as a new foundation for a discussion of the public good. Though the ideas of Feuerbach are not usually evoked when discussing the public good, they can have a significant impact on our understanding of the purposes of higher education and its promotion of the public good. To that end, relevant theories from within and outside of the usual higher education literature are incorporated into the review of literature.

The review itself is divided into four sections that help conceptualize the theoretical model. The first section surveys the German conceptions of the I-thou theory, particularly the works of Ludwig Feuerbach and Martin Buber. The second section examines literature relating to the public good as a means of exploring how the I-thou theoretical framework can strengthen abstract notions of the public good. The third section specifically surveys higher education institutions and their role in promoting the public good, and specifically in recasting a new relationship between individuals within society. Here, I draw heavily on the ideas of Pusser (2006) and Marginson (2007), two leading scholars of the public good and higher education. Lastly, I survey neoliberalism and neoliberal views (and conflicts) from within traditional public good theories. After the literature review, there is a discussion regarding how the I-thou notion can be integrated into practice. This calls for the use of imagination. While it may sound too abstract or ethereal, scholars must begin to re-conceptualize their theories and practices, and incorporate this new conception of the I-thou in order to maintain a vibrant and healthy notion of the public good. Finally, the conclusion provides a brief summary of these complex ideas.

### **The I-thou Theoretical Model**

Writing during the Enlightenment and the Age of Reason, German philosopher Johann Fichte sought to base society on a rational foundation in the light of then burgeoning critiques of God and religion. He sought to found society on notions of knowing and consciousness wherein, knowing was not passive, but an active process undertaken by the individual or the I. Yet, Fichte arrived at a conundrum. The I could only understand itself by going outside itself. The I had

to have a “Not-I,” or something other than itself, in order to define itself as I. Thus, Fichte argued that the solitary individual is a fiction because without another to define itself against, there can be no I (Fichte, 2000; Kamenka, 1989). It is this idea, that the solitary individual is a fiction, which is at the core of my argument for a new vision of the public good. Later German thinkers expanded Fichte’s notion of the I-Not I. The most noteworthy was Georg Hegel, who expanded Fichte’s notion of the Not-I into the thou, or the other. Hegel saw all of reality as a motion towards the other.

Yet it was one of Hegel’s disciples, Ludwig Feuerbach, who made the I-thou the core of his theories and it is his ideas that can shed light on the present moment. Feuerbach defined humankind or “Man” as the species-being, or the entire species taken together. An individual human being, in isolation, is limited. He has a limited number of talents and capabilities, as well as many faults. It was only in union with others that the individual could rise above his limited nature because the faults of the individuals were cancelled by the positive attributes of the species taken as a whole. For Feuerbach, “the *ego* [the individual] attains to consciousness of the world through the consciousness of the *thou* [another]” (p. 98). This is Feuerbach’s “I-thou” notion, and it is the cornerstone of his entire philosophy. Individuals needed each other in order to be happy and more importantly, to have a purpose to exist at all. The “I” or the individual could only be perceived in the consciousness of the “thou,” of another being. Feuerbach argued that God was not one, undividable supreme substance, but rather, “God” could only exist as an exchange between two beings. He wrote, “without other men, the world is not only empty and cold, but meaningless” (p. 135). The notion that human happiness and fulfillment can only be experienced in unison with other individuals is in direct contrast with neoliberalism because it is based on the notion of individualism. The public institutions of a polity heavily influenced by neoliberalism may no longer be able to serve the public good because those institutions are built on a concept that cannot be entertained by neoliberalism. This concept is the asocial or atomistic individual.

Over 90 years later, the Israeli philosopher Martin Buber expanded on the concept of the I-thou. He argued that the I-thou is a type of relationship that human beings hold with one another. However, most human beings are involved in a much less noble relationship, that of the I-it. In the I-it relationship, the individual and the rest of society are divided neatly into compartmentalized categories (Buber, 1970). The I or individual in the I-it is different than the individual in the I-thou. Unfortunately, Buber argues that modern life has eradicated the I-thou and exalts the I-it relationship between people because profit and power are the only legitimate bonds between individuals. Despite this suppression, Buber (1970) holds firm that the I cannot be abstracted, and it cannot be seen as a discrete and bounded entity apart from society. Buber believed that it was the responsibility of the teacher to

awaken the understanding of the I-thou in their students. Writing roughly a century after Buber, educational theorist Alfie Kohn (1990) used the notion of the I-thou to argue for a new conception of human nature and society. Kohn railed against the seemingly common sense view that human beings are inherently bad or self-interested. He was not naïve to argue that all human beings are good, instead he examined hundreds of studies which argued that human beings have just as much inclination toward empathy and altruism as they do toward avarice and self-interest. In light of this proclivity toward compassion and kindness, Kohn argued that schools and policymakers should promote these altruistic and empathetic tenets of our nature. Here, Kohn (1990) saw the I-thou as fundamental to understanding social relations. He held that society could not be based on isolated individuals but the I-thou, the relationship *between* individuals. It is this idea that I expand towards understanding the role of higher education institutions in promoting the public good.

Why the I-thou and why now? The reason is that public higher education is facing a unique historical situation, that of neoliberalism. As Malott, Hill and Banfield argue neoliberalism is a “specific political project within the history of class struggle that has seen the reassertion of the dominance of Capital...over the vast bulk of humanity” (2013, p. 1). The substance of relations between human beings is markedly changing under neoliberalism (Giroux, 2011). As this paper maintains, neoliberalism is antithetical to the core mission of public education. It retains a distinctive focus on the individual (as a consumer) and largely neglects any social or communal organizations of society (such as public education). The I-thou is the crucial building block of society because any society requires the effort of multiple people (Feuerbach, 2006). Neoliberalism neglects half of this crucial formula, the thou. That is why I contend that higher education must promote the notion of the I-thou in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I will now examine the theory of the public good and public goods in order to demonstrate how we can integrate the I-thou into our consideration of these phenomena in order to broaden the conception of the atomistic individual and revitalize the notion of human relationships which is central for a thriving democracy.

### **What Does Public Mean?**

Public goods are generally characterized as non-rivalrous and non-excludable (Marginson, 2007). Specifically, a non-rivalrous resource is construed as a resource that cannot be depleted, such as peace, and non-excludable clarifies that no person can be prevented from receiving the benefits of the resource (Marginson, 2007). These are not absolute definitions and rarely are public goods purely non-rivalrous or non-excludable. A more comprehensive approach towards conceptualizing non-rivalry and non-excludability is to utilize a spectrum and explore the limitations. Thus, almost all public goods are impure in some form because they can be partially rivalrous or partially excludable, or rivalrous and non-

excludable or non-rivalrous but excludable (Marginson, 2011). For instance, education is generally non-rivalrous, but the more students that consume educational resources the more difficult it becomes to administer an education for all. Similarly, education at an elite institution like Harvard is rivalrous and excludable because admission is limited and tuition is inaccessible for many.

Public and nonprofit institutions almost always produce public goods because the market does not supply them (Calhoun, 1998; Marginson, 2007). Non-rivalry and non-excludability seriously constrain profits, and thus, market actors are extremely reluctant to produce public goods because they cannot profit from them (Marginson, 2007; Newfield, 2008). Marginson argued that this state and market divide is characteristic of the public good. He cautions that this is too simplistic however. In some cases, private sector entities can create public goods. For instance, if a private company markets a new drug that helps cure certain kinds of cancer, not only are the individual patients helped, but the general health of society is bolstered as well. However, many times private companies produce public “bads,” such as pollution and financial insecurity.

One of the crucial features of public goods and bads is that they exhibit “externalities.” Public bads are unintended or undesirable externalities that affect the public or large numbers of it. An externality can be thought of as a spillover effect, or unintended consequence, either positive or negative, that results because of a public good or bad. Even privately produced market goods can have positive and negative spillovers. The recession of 2008 was produced by private financial institutions, albeit with government influence, but had severe negative effects on society as a whole. A public good, like the creation of knowledge at a university, usually has positive externalities. Knowledge, even if it is restricted, will eventually flower and enhance the lives of everyone (Marginson, 2011). The benefits of knowledge production or of receiving a public education extend well beyond their immediate participants (Kaul, Grunberg & Stern, 1999; Marginson, 2007). The externalities gained from public goods, such as a literate population, clean air, knowledge production and world peace cannot be quantified or marketed, although they do have implications for market activities. Externalities gained from public goods are complex and far reaching, but their benefits to society cannot be understated.

It would not be advantageous for market actors to produce many public goods because there is little profit involved, and they could not prohibit free riders or people who did not pay from taking advantage of it (i.e., one cannot inhibit people from consuming clean air). The market can produce some public goods, for instance, if a company pays for a training course for its workers. The workers then have knowledge that can impact society. Since the market will not produce many public goods however, government entities and non-profit organizations, and more generally cooperative efforts, must produce them (Marginson, 2011; Mansbridge,

1998). Obscured by the attack from neoliberalism, public education institutions, and really, all public institutions, embody these necessary cooperative efforts and altruism. Successful societies with high standards of living depend on high degrees of altruism from their members (Mansfield, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Wolfe, 1998). But of course, there is no such thing as pure altruism, as it usually coincides with self-interest and is a combination of societal effects, individual psychology and even evolution (Wolfe, 1998). Nonetheless, cooperation, altruism and concern for another, are integral building blocks to any and all forms of society. Similarly, the effects of cooperation, when enacted, create tremendous positive externalities.

While public institutions, non-profits or sometimes even private entities can produce public goods, the defining characteristic of public education, and all public institutions for that matter, is state subsidization (Marginson, 2007). Yet as Marginson argues, this definition may be faulty, especially as society moves into the twenty-first century. Democratic states are supposed to be reflections of the populace. Subsequently, public institutions are also presumed to reflect this populace. But not all states are democratic. And even in democratic states, participation and representation vary and can be restricted. Furthermore, decreased funding hampers public administration. This conception of public goods, based on state subsidization, is too limited and narrow. Thus, many scholars have begun to call for recognition of global public goods (Kaul, Grunberg & Stern, 1999; Marginson, 2011). Some examples of global public goods are world peace, financial security, especially in light of the 2008 recession, and the creation of knowledge (Kaul, Grunberg & Stern, 1999). Global public goods however are extremely hard to produce because they require global cooperation and some degree of global governance, and global policy is not binding for nation states (Kaul, Grunberg & Stern, 1999). Nonetheless, many scholars are now calling for society to pay attention to global public goods. It does not make sense for citizens to be cloistered in their nations while the world is becoming more globalized (Geiger, 1993). Complex interactions and linkages across space and time, economic markets and political alliances are the defining characteristics of the globalized age (Held, 2001; Spring, 2008). The I-thou must not only inform theories of a public good bounded by national boundaries, but it must be a global concept as well in order to reflect the global public good. Yet, we must first understand the relationship of higher education institutions to the public good(s).

### **Public Goods and Higher Education**

There is a distinction between public goods and *the* public good (Calhoun, 1998; Mansfield, 1998; Marginson, 2007). The notion of the public good both precedes the creation of public goods and is a result of them. A society with a strong conception of the public good can more readily produce necessary public goods and their subsequent positive externalities (Mansbridge, 1998). In particular, if public education institutions are re-conceptualized as part of the public good, they

may go a long way in augmenting and positively altering the production of public goods. The concept of the public good is inseparable from the production of public goods.

Marginson argued that the conception of the public good is much more complex and difficult than that of public goods. Mansbridge and Calhoun further contend that the notion of the public good is and must always be a contested one. Mansfield warns that in this contested space dominant groups can control discourse and shape a vision of the public good that only suits certain sections of society (Mansbridge, 1998). Dominant groups and leaders can also cast appeals to the public good in emotional terms and resort to demagoguery. Nonetheless, despite these shortcomings, she argues that it is in the best interest of any society to define their public good because a strong sense of public good leads to a healthier, more enlightened and stabilized citizenry (Mansbridge, 1998). The key to this process is recognizing that the public good does not exist outside society; it is not a priori or predetermined. It must be forged within the specific societal framework and historical conditions of any given society (Calhoun, 1998; Mansbridge, 1998). So how can members of a society continually create the public good, or even decide what it should entail? Calhoun has stated that, “the public sphere is a differentiated body joined by the capacity of its members to sustain a common discourse across lines of difference” (Calhoun, 1998). Subsequently, a rough definition of the public good is that of different homogenous communities within a delimited area and formed under a single society forging a common self-awareness while still maintaining their differences (Calhoun, 1998). The public good does not stamp out difference, nor is it simply a utilitarian notion of the greatest good for the greatest amount of people, or some lowest common denominator that unifies all. The public good must be instead forged by the utilization of bridging and cooperative structures (Calhoun, 1998). These structures must be able to tap into or establish the altruistic and cooperative potential of members of a polity. Cooperative structures must employ complex methods and disciplines to help articulate a true public good. Public education must aid in this process and equip students to participate in the public good. Yet, public higher education institutions are deterred from accomplishing this due to neoliberalism.

### **Neoliberalism and the Public**

Milton Friedman once described public education as a “socialist island in a free-market sea” (Friedman & Friedman, 1981, p. 143). This sentiment is indicative of neoliberalism’s view of public education, and most public institutions, in general. Neoliberals perceive public education as being coercive (Plant, 2010). Revenue in the form of taxes is collected from citizens and then used to furnish schools and public universities (Fowler, 2009; Johns, Morphet & Alexander, 1983). In essence, it is a redistribution of wealth and an affront to the functioning of the free market (Johns, Morphet & Alexander, 1983). Taxes and any social spending

are the antithesis of neoliberalism because they detract from the equilibrium of the free market (Klein, 2007). In their place, neoliberals want to privatize all social institutions and let the market determine how they are run (Peet, 2009). This will supposedly lead to efficiency and social harmony because the market, if untouched by human intervention, is thought to be scientific and rational and able to harmonize all aspects of society (Harvey, 2005; Klein, 2007). It is believed that free individuals will make rational choices that are in their self-interest and that they will keep competing businesses in check. In addition, many neoliberals view the public sphere, particularly education, as virgin territory to be exploited by capitalism (Klein, 2007). This desire to cut taxes and social spending, as well as the massive campaign of privatization, has had a drastic and harmful effect on public education (Fowler, 2009; Giroux, 2011; Rhoads & Torres, 2006; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

The favored method of discipline for public education, both higher and secondary, is to withhold precious revenue generated by taxation (Rhoads & Torres, 2006; Santos, 2006). The idea is to starve public higher education institutions of funding and either force them to go under or seek external monies from the private sector, thus making them more of a market good (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Policymakers and conservative think tanks demean public secondary schools and public money is funneled into charter schools, virtual schools and other private, for profit ventures. It is similar for higher education institutions. Therefore, it is not surprising that public school students do not perform well on mandated state tests that enrich giant standardized testing companies (Giroux, 2011). The current plight of public schools falls back onto this decrease in funding. In the United States, taxes fall under the plenary powers of the federal and individual state governments (Johns, Morphet & Alexander, 1983). Plenary powers refer to the notion that legislatures can pass laws that are desirable so long as those laws are not found to violate the state or federal constitution. Furthermore, states have the right to provide for the welfare of the people, under which falls the power to tax (Johns, Morphet & Alexander, 1983). Taxes do not have to produce a tangible benefit or direct beneficiaries, but can yield benefits that are incapable of true measurement (Johns, Morphet & Alexander, 1983). As noted earlier, public goods, while possessing market functions, are complex entities that cannot be measured by markets alone. Taxes yield a communal and civic benefit, especially in regards to taxation for both secondary and higher education (Johns, Morphet & Alexander, 1983). More than just a loss of revenue however, the attack on public education, both in regards to the decreased funding as well as the massive propaganda campaign, has threatened the entire notion of social progress, educating for citizenship, and the social fabric.

Neoliberalism is antithetical to any type of communal or social bond (Giroux, 2011; Harvey, 2005; Malott, Hill & Banfield, 2013). Still these bonds are

what make a society viable. In a free society, public education is the foundation of these bonds (Giroux, 2011; Hill, 2012; Gutek, 1995; Johns, Morphet & Alexander, 1983). Some neoliberals begrudgingly realize the necessity of social bonds and call for their minimization, if for no other reason than to establish and enforce contracts and punish offenders of the free market (Plant, 2010). Yet, in the public sector many neoliberals have cast the bond of society as overly bureaucratic, inefficient and opposed to the market (Plant, 2010; Giroux, 2011). All forms of taxation are said to be “coercion” (Plant, 2010). Neoliberalism in many respects can be said to market the *devolution* of the public good, of any cooperative movements because it erodes these social bonds that have been built over the history of humankind and which are responsible for our shared culture, our achievements over the centuries, our forms of government and our languages (Giroux, 2011; Hill, 2012). This is why a new notion of a global public good, grounded in new communal relations, is needed. Further, this is a vision which public higher education can help establish.

#### **Imagining a Better World and then Building it**

The aim of this literature review is to apply the principles of the I-thou framework to the functioning of higher education institutions. The use of the I-thou aligns with Harding’s notion of method and scientific investigation. He (2004) argues that using democratic ideas to highlight problems for study in science makes for better science because it is these problems that have a detrimental impact on society. The question is then: what criterion does one use to determine democratic issues? This is where the rupture with science is evident, because there are no fixed criteria. There lies the great challenge in applying the I-thou framework. The theoretical model of the I-thou, and its successful implementation and adaptation, cannot be empirically tested and readily verified. How can scholars truly measure and calculate notions such as empathy and social justice? The I-thou is not a concrete concept, but rather an abstract one, which, at least for now, cannot be applied as a more discreet framework. Nonetheless the I-thou does offer a new vantage point for higher education scholars to assess higher education institutions and a democratic vantage point to begin an investigation. However, the use of democratic investigation to inform science and other social science investigations requires the use of imagination. Weiner (2007) argued that we as a society are suffering from a crisis of imagination because neoliberalism inhibits creative thought and focuses only on profitability and workforce training. In order to overcome neoliberalism, Weiner (2007) states that scholars must imagine something better. The “method” this paper employs is democratic and imaginative. Although there is no scientific criterion, I believe this approach allows for a much richer result.

The notion of the public good can be enhanced if individuals understand that they are one “I” and that their very notion of I-ness and self-identity cannot

exist apart from society and the thou, or the recognition of the other. This is not a call for a herd-like mentality, or a fascist elevation of the state. Rather, the I-thou can be conceptualized as centered on three main points: the individual, the individual's relation to other individuals and the individuals' relation to humanity at large (Feuerbach, 2006). It is this conception that gives rise to the dual nature of existence, as both an individual with a self-identity and as a member of a civilization, as well as the interconnectivity of these spheres.

In the most far-reaching sense, the notion of the public good and its public institutions can be seen as mankind's collective attempt to not only survive but also give a sense of purpose or meaning to life. Yet this notion of the public good will remain abstract unless it is undergirded by the robust production of public goods. This purpose must be conceived of in the framework of the I-thou because, as Feuerbach reminds us, without others, individuals would have no purpose. Individuals would also have no society, no economy and most importantly no language. The very thoughts we as individuals use to describe ourselves to ourselves come from these shared notions of meaning that have evolved over time (Feuerbach, 2006). If the I-thou concept enters the discussion of the public good, it can act as a bridging tool for the establishment of the public good. Individuals no longer are discrete entities, but complexly related to each other. The I-thou can be a useful concept in regards to the distributional issues surrounding public goods, and the discussion of positive and negative externalities across global lines. If society and individuals are seen as complexly related and interwoven, with dense networks, and not just competing actors, than distributional issues must come to reflect this. For instance, proponents of higher taxation and smaller government would not necessarily be two competing groups; the "takers and the makers." Instead, it would be understood that the proponents of limited government and militant individualism could not have achieved what they did without the thou. Public roads, public education, public defense and security, as well as the accumulated stock of global knowledge, are integral to the success of individuals. There is no such thing as a solitary individual; no one could have any success without the accumulated achievements of society. Similarly, proponents of large governments and welfare policies must come to realize that welfare and general aid can only be temporary. The goal of any state should be to enact a more fair distribution of money and resources which will enhance the lives of all citizens, allowing them to contribute to the public good as necessary members of the thou. Any restriction of the thou or society is a restriction of the I or the individual. This of course overlaps with the more general notion of the public good. Despite the difficulty involved, the application of this framework is necessary to rebut the corrosive influence of neoliberalism on democracy. The application of the I-thou framework then is more of an imaginative exercise. From the literature review, a collective sense of the direction of public higher education is presented for critique.

In addition, a forward and progressive direction for public higher education with the I-thou is postulated by drawing on the scholarship of global public goods. The results then are not verifiable results, but rather the possible beginnings of new inquires and directions of public higher education in relation to the I-thou framework.

The conception of the I-thou may help to foster new linkages and connections between public education institutions and a wide range of other social actors. While public education institutions must rely on state funds, these are diminishing. Their public-ness cannot simply be dependent on state subsidization. Public education institutions must see their larger role in providing global public goods. In addition, they must establish the public good within their localities, regions and even nationally and globally. This, I believe, can be accomplished with a dedication to the I-thou principle. For the I-thou to be applied to public higher education it cannot simply be a theory, it must become part of faculty and student identity. This can be a powerful method for those who are dedicated to preserving the public mission of public education.

Sen (1999) argues that the creation of global public goods will require a new conception of identity that transcends beyond the arbitrary borders of the nation state. By no means does he call for an end to the nation state or for individuals to ignore its mandates, but moreover for the recognition of the multiple and overlapping, and at times conflicting, identities that individuals may possess. For instance, a citizen of Canada who is a female teacher may simultaneously identify with other females irrespective of nation-state affiliation as well as teachers across the world. She may even identify more fully with her supra-national affiliations than with her nation state (Sen, 1999). Sen notes that policymakers and other bodies in nation states must begin to recognize the role that multiple identities play, and how they can be the building blocks of a new global public good. Faculty should begin to recognize this as well. They could work to foster a new type of identity, however, not an identity rooted in the individual or the I, but a new type of identity that cultivates the notion of the thou amongst different individuals and organizations.

The fostering of the I-thou starts with the recognition of balance between individual interests and duty to the species. This dual and complementary conception can be the heart of a new, reinvigorated conception of the public good. Individual and social betterment must coincide for a truly progressive society. As Putnam (2000) argues, societies and communities that exhibit high levels of social capital or trust between individuals have higher standards of living, lower crime rates and are generally just better places to live. In 2000, Putnam argued that American society exhibits extremely low social capital. The fostering of the thou identity aligns with Putnam's (2000) call for increasing social capital. Sourenta and Vaden (2007) argue that technology now allows humanity to connect in

hitherto unforeseen ways. New technology can also allow for a new interconnectedness between humanity, what Sourenta and Vaden liken to the *noosphere*, or the ancient Greek conception of an all-knowing brain of all humanity. The new technology can be the bedrock of the new conceptions between the I-thou and for those who wish to foster this relationship. While this may sound far-reaching and implausible, it is an understatement to say that humankind is more interconnected than ever. This interconnection can be the foundation of the connections between the I and the thou and a new vision of a global public good. A conception of the *noosphere* that is undergirded by a just concept of technology and based in the I-thou can help lead to a new identity formations. A just conception of technology is one that is rooted in service to humanity, not profit. Faculty in various disciplines can foster the I-thou identity through scholarship, research, service and teaching. Hill (2006) argues that most teacher training programs focus on sterile methodology and do not grapple with the real issues facing education, which include poverty and decreased funding. Faculty in teacher training programs, instead, can teach the revolutionary potential of the notion of the public. Future teachers, as well as graduate students in the sciences, engineering and the humanities cannot be educated as isolated researchers, but rather as part of a much larger and interconnected whole. Teachers, scientists, historians, engineers and all the occupations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century may require a conception of the thou, of a unified identity. Here, education schools can take a leading role. Education is a field, not a discipline because it has no stable worldview but rather borrows from other disciplines (Berliner, 2003; Labree, 1998). While some see this as a weakness, others view it as a strength because it allows education the flexibility to incorporate insights from all other disciplines and create interdisciplinary theories with multiple worldviews. While not sacrificing this freedom, the I-thou can act as a new disciplinary worldview for education. Educationalists can put the I-thou relationship at the center of their research, scholarship and teaching. In fact many already do. For what is pedagogy? As Freire, Giroux and others argue, pedagogy is love, and love can be taught (Fromm, 1956) as a means of recognizing the interconnectedness of society, and the demonstration of a genuine concern and respect for the equality of others (Ibid.). The I-thou is an expression of this interconnectedness of the species, and of the potential for humanity to progress if its talents are pooled and shortcomings are eliminated (Buber, 1970; Feuerbach, 2006). While the *I*, the individual, is a crucial and equal part of the equation, the interconnectedness between I's is what comprises society, civilization, the public good, and now perhaps even the global public good.

The notion of multiple identities, especially ones that are voluntary (i.e., doctors, professors, laborers) can have an influential role in the creation of the public good and the fostering of the I-thou. People choose to be teachers, or professors and doctors, and may identify more with these identities than with ones

such as race or ethnicity. In addition, the creation of new identities can be a tool for those who wish to foster the I-thou. What other affiliations, identities and connections can promote the public good? What other connections between these identities can foster more social capital? For instance can citizens of a nation state organize as teachers, doctors or laborers, and have different or complimentary visions of the public good? Higher education can play a major role in fostering solidarity between identities and creating new ones, such as a community of scholars, globalists or cosmopolitans.

Again, these identities are not meant to displace those affiliated with the nation-state, but as a means of augmenting them with new perspectives. These new identities would not be prescribed by political boundaries. Rather, these new citizens would be beholden to an idea, such as a “citizen of knowledge” or a “citizens of social justice.” The foundation of these identities is voluntary and rooted in higher claims than arbitrary boundaries. Citizens of knowledge for instance could pursue the creation and dissemination of useful and just knowledge that can enhance any notion of the public good. Citizens of social justice would have a commitment to social justice, which transcends their nation state. In the widest sense, these new identities and citizenships could fight for a new conception of the public good and public goods alongside the *glo-na-cal* (and regional) conception put forth earlier. They can add new regions and spaces (not bound by political boundaries). This new heuristic is termed the *glo-na-cal-X*. The X standing for the hitherto unknown and new formulations of the public good put forth by new identities, citizenships and most importantly the interconnections between different identities and social positions (Marginson & Rhoads, 2002).

New affiliations and identities can illuminate different visions of the global public good, as well as the production of public goods. Through conferences, online publications, scholarly publications, the creation of alternative classes and disciplines, for example, higher education can help to inspire new and positive identity creation. Of course, with group formation there is always the risk of promoting fanatical or exclusionary groups (Putnam, 2000). One of the aims of faculty members must then be to promote the notion of bridging capital, which is simply the action of promoting inclusiveness (Putnam, 2000). The I-thou notion can be a potent concept for aiding faculty in promoting the idea of inclusivity, and connecting to different cultures and groups. New transnational and supra-national identities and affiliations that cross national lines can help foster inclusivity and recognition of the global nature of public goods; examples of which include knowledge, clean air, peace, financial stability and humanism.

Faculty in various disciplines can circumvent the neoliberal and market structures through horizontal networks and partnerships, linking diverse actors and units in higher education. To some degree, these horizontal networks are already forming. What I am advocating is for these networks to not simply be defensive

alliances against the encroaching neoliberal influence, or new ways to extract funding from private sources, but rather as a semi-unified front to promote the I-thou as new identity for faculty and students and the global public good in general. As a horizontal movement, these linkages could be between faculty in different disciplines, universities, and private non-profit and public institutions. In contrast a vertical structure entails formal governing structures and bureaucracies (Marginson, Murphy & Peters, 2010). These new horizontal linkages and networks can create new entities and “invisible colleges,” new global flows of ideas and people that can bypass national laws, vertical structures and bureaucracies in an effort to ensconce and insulate global markets and neoliberal “reforms” of higher education; drawing new connections within and between higher education, nation, local and regional structures, NGOs and other actors (Marginson, Murphy & Peters, 2010). These invisible colleges and other such groups, populated by new identities and dedicated to promoting the I-thou, could then pressure the vertical structures to create a more beneficial and inclusive vision of the public good. Higher education faculty can circumvent the mandates of vertical structures such governments by the creation of horizontal networks. These networks can put diverse actors in touch, all aimed at promoting the public good for different regions as well as the world at large; using the heuristic of the glo-na-cal. Vertical movements, such as new policies, can be pursued as well in conjunction with horizontal movements, such as international partnerships between university departments or social actors. Of course, as pointed out earlier, knowledge is perhaps the most perfect global public good. The creation and maintenance of horizontal movements, of new global flows across distance, time and cyberspace, through pedagogy, scholarship and service can be the foundation of a new glo-na-cal public good, as well the production of more discrete public goods necessary to sustain and enhance civilization. More importantly, these new linkages can help to form the bonds of the I-thou.

The public good of any area is never an *a priori* or predetermined concept; it must be built democratically as a continual project. Scholars, educators and activists who have dedicated themselves to the public good can carry this project forward. In addition, it is not some universal notion, but rather configured by policy (Marginson, 2007). Both Mansbridge and Marginson noted how some notions of the public resemble the public sphere put forth by Enlightenment thinkers (Mansbridge, 1998; Marginson, 2007). This sphere was not based on the social contract like government, but instead on the free association of citizens who come together to discuss problems and issues. This is at the heart of democracy. Marginson stated that higher education institutions can play an influential role in this public sphere (Marginson, 2007). Giroux also asserts this position when he argues that pedagogy and democracy are inseparable (Giroux, 2011). He goes on to maintain that educational institutions must provide citizens with the knowledge

and conceptual tools to be able to construct the public good and the subsequent production of global public goods. In turn, Mansbridge suggests that students must be able to ask questions such as: who is framing the public good? Is it framed by those in power, by elites? Who benefits from certain conceptions of the public good? Are leaders using appeals to emotion to establish a certain vision of the public good? Is the dominant conception of the public disadvantaging certain groups in society? At the heart of these questions and the global public good is the I-thou relationship. Students can be taught to ask: what is the relation of one individual to another? Are individuals seen as customers or citizens, as solitary I's or rather I-thou? One way for pedagogy to be democratic is for it to prepare students to participate in this public sphere and discuss these issues with their fellow citizens. Higher education institutions can give students and faculty the means to create and engage in horizontal networks. Thus, create new global flows of knowledge, and ideas to eventually bypass rigid vertical structures. Marginson stresses that the terms "flow" and "liquidity" are apt metaphors for the global age as they illustrate the mobile ability in an age of instantaneous communication (Marginson, Murphy & Peters, 2010). If this metaphor is carried even further, we could imagine the horizontal networks of interwoven and complex relationships, and the global public goods and new identities created by higher education, as forming a deluge of information; one that would also consist of formidable levels of altruism and justice. This deluge would not be an uncoordinated or random tidal wave. Instead, it would follow existing interconnections in society and more importantly create new ones. As isolated, unconnected pieces, information is data (Fullan, 2001). Yet, when interpreted, information is knowledge and power (Fullan, 2001). The hope is that this deluge of knowledge can give citizens in various localities and regions in the world the tools they need to begin to construct a new identity. This would enable them to pursue and sustain the global public good.

This may be bordering on a utopian dream. Despite the fact this may not be possible, scholars should still nevertheless aim for it (Jay, 1996). As the nineteenth century anarchist Mikhail Bakunin (1999) argued, it only takes a small number of well-positioned people to enact massive social changes. He argues that these individuals can silently but diligently set in motion reforms and changes. I would add that if these invisible agents populate the global network and invisible colleges, and help promote the I-thou identity, the outlines of a new world can begin to develop

### **Conclusion**

Maxwell (2006) contends that instead of merely analyzing and summarizing the literature in a literature review, scholars should look for concepts they can use and employ. The I-thou is such a concept. The guiding principle of a literature review is not comprehensiveness, but relevance (Maxwell, 2006). The I-thou may be more relevant now than ever before. The reason for employing the I-thou

principle is to counteract the atomizing and destructive influence of neoliberalism. The I-thou does not take the lone individual as the basis of society but focuses on the relationships *between* individuals. This new conception of society and social bonds, one grounded on relationships between individuals and not individuals themselves, may be a guide for navigating the emerging boundaries of globalization and a way toward a true global public good.

The inherent differences in any society can begin to be bridged with a new understanding of the individual's relation to that society and brought forth by a dedication to the I-thou principle, which can be fostered by colleges that circumvent the neoliberal structures that surround them, and by putting pressure on vertical structures. It may seem like folly to argue for this new communal centered education at a time of such rampant greed and individualism, and when the global market is the center of all educational rhetoric (Chomsky, 1999; Giroux, 2011; Hill, 2012). Nonetheless, I maintain that what is needed is a new and revitalized conception of the public good, public goods, and public institutions, and in particular, public education. A new global identity, fostered and promoted by higher education, rooted in the I-thou, can be a starting point for this revitalized conception of the global public good.

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