Confronting Neo-liberal Regimes: The Post-Marxist Embrace of Populism and Realpolitik

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The dominance of neoliberal policies in Anglo-American countries during the past two decades has not only had a profound impact on the character and programmes of major parties, but has also led to dramatic changes within the ranks of former Marxists and critical theorists.¹ These former radicals now either believe that the old categories of Left and Right are irrelevant, or argue that the political concepts used by these historical movements have been largely rendered obsolete by contemporary conditions.² Here, I would like to specifically focus upon the quite different, contextually driven responses to neoliberal regimes by two post-Marxist schools of thought that are expressed in the American journal Telos and British journals, especially Economy and Society. These new exponents of an anti-Marxist Realpolitik not only oppose the universal values of the radical Left, but draw upon a mixture of traditions and theories that continue to be associated with anti-class and anti-Marxist elite theory. Moreover, the recent upsurge of right-wing populist movements in OECD countries has been complemented by Telos’ theoretical cultivation of
‘postmodern populism’. These anti-socialist analyses should not be ignored for they raise a number of pertinent questions to do with the possibility and the form of a viable alternative politics given the impact of neoliberalism, globalization and postmodern cultural processes on contemporary societies.

Before discussing these post-Marxist theorists, it is important to recall that in the decades preceding the rise of Mussolini and Hitler, a body of classical elite theory emerged that also claimed to understand the workings of Realpolitik. Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto directed much of their critique against the optimism of socialists who believed in education and the goal of equality. They dismissed Marxism as a metaphysical theory that ignored the real workings of politics. In this respect, there are certain similarities between classical elite theories and recent post-modern critiques of class analysis and grand narratives. Max Weber, who ended up a quasi-liberal democrat, warned against the illusions of advocates of direct democracy. Not only would the experts replace the revolutionaries once the barricades came down but, he argued, each step towards greater equality would only lead to further bureaucratization. Likewise, Robert Michels’s disillusioning critique of the gap between leaders and rank-and-file members in the pre-1915 German Social Democratic Party ultimately ended, as we know, in the ‘iron law of oligarchy’ which he applied to all organizations.

In his book The Destruction of Reason, published in 1952, Lukács argued that the preoccupation of the elite theorists, of Nietzsche and Heidegger, and of other philosophical tendencies with irrationality, tragic existentialism, vitalism and cynicism all culminated in their support for fascism. While there is a certain degree of truth in Lukács’ polemical thesis—for example, Pareto and Michels’s admiration of Mussolini, or Heidegger and Schmitt’s embrace of Nazism—we also know that elite theory led to a redefinition of liberal democratic theory in the form of Schumpeterian and American pluralist notions of a circulation of elites.

1 I would like to thank Peter Christoff and Julie Stephens for their valuable help in improving this paper.
2 I am not referring here to ‘beyond Left and Right’ theorists such as Norberto Bobbio and Anthony Giddens. See A. Giddens, Beyond Left and Right The Future of Radical Politics, Cambridge 1994, and N. Bobbio, Left and Right: The Significance of a Political Distinction, Cambridge 1996. The latter fit into a body of liberal-left academic analysis that still believes in universal values and, in Gidden’s case, is publicly identified with Blair’s ‘radical centre’ version of neoliberalism. Nor am I referring to New Age movements and theorists who reject conventional political divisions. Post-industrial theorists such as Alvin Toffler have also long prophesied the emergence of a totally new type of politics based upon ‘post-materialist’ cybernetic fusions of the local and the global. See his The Third Wave, London 1980.
These pluralist notions of power became, and largely remain, the foundation of middle-class conceptions of citizenship in the twentieth century. Despite serious flaws in Weber’s theory of bureaucracy and Michels’s iron law of oligarchy, no radical democrat can afford to ignore the fundamental issues raised by these theorists. Similarly, one does not have to agree with Mosca and Pareto’s ahistorical and stereotypical divisions of people into lions and foxes, or the supposed inherent genetic differences between the elite and the masses, to recognize the necessity of understanding back-room political machinations, the irrational aspects of voting behaviour and other forms of undemocratic practice in contemporary societies.

Over eighty years ago Michels warned that: ‘The problem of socialism is not merely a problem in economics… Socialism is also an administrative problem, a problem of democracy, and this not in the technical and administrative sphere alone, but also in the sphere of psychology.’ For three decades, the New Left, the counter-culture and new social movements have struggled to develop democratic alternatives to Stalinist dictatorships, command planning, bureaucratic social democratic welfare states and ‘correct line’ revolutionary sects. Just as Lenin found Pareto’s critique of Marxism much more difficult to deal with than conventional bourgeois criticisms so, too, the new post-Marxist practitioners of Realpolitik theory challenge views and objectives widely held by socialists and new social movements.

The Political Context

If the classical elite theorists were responding to the rise of socialism and liberalism, the new generation of Realpolitik analysts have developed pessimistic and disillusioned concepts of democracy and power after their earlier contributions to the New Left and after what Telos claims is the historically obsolete civil war between the Left and the Right. These new post-Marxian theorists do not present themselves as anti-democratic. On the contrary, one school grouped around Telos claim that only a revived form of organic populism can counter corporate capitalism and the dominant cultural and political elites. In nineteenth-century Russia, Marxism developed after the Narodniks and other populist movements failed to persuade the masses to join their cause. Thus there is a certain irony in Telos turning to populism after abandoning its earlier development of Marxist critique.

The other school of post-Marxist theorists—whom I term the Anglo-Foucauldians—use Economy and Society as their flagship, even though the journal is not exclusively committed to their views and publishes a diverse body of material. The Anglo-Foucauldians also argue that Marxism is obsolete and point to its inability to come to terms with the new forms of ‘liberal regimes of truth and governmentality’. Not surprisingly, their ideas, which have been evolving since the late 1970s and the 1980s, reflect responses to the specific historical conditions in North America, Britain and Australia. Their political context is the decline of the Left during almost two decades of Conservative Party rule in Britain and thirteen years of Labor government in Australia.

Both anti-Marxist schools share a strong opposition to universalistic values and institutions even though they articulate different political perspectives and depart from quite dissimilar Marxist and post-Marxist foundations. Despite these differences, there are certain affinities between the two schools such as their common rejection of ‘overarching’ policies associated with socialist parties, and the use of the writings of conservative authoritarian Carl Schmitt to support their critique of radical left theory and practice.

Paul Piccone and the Telos group address issues arising from American political culture since the 1960s and specifically, the impact of socio-economic policies on communities since the Reaganite policies of the 1980s. These issues range from the effect of deindustrialization and neoliberal reforms on traditional working-class and rural constituencies, to the rise of various forms of religious fundamentalism and a plethora of populist reactions against the cultural liberalism promoted by feminists, gays and other new social movements.

If the Anglo-Foucauldians’ philosophical inspiration comes from Nietzsche and Heidegger via Foucault, their political terrain is very much the historical changes to the welfare state implemented by the neoliberal regimes of Thatcher, Major and Blair in the UK, and Hawke, Keating and Howard in Australia. The Anglo-Foucauldian or ‘governmentality’ theorists such as Nikolas Rose, Peter Miller and Graham Burchell may have London as their publication headquarters, but rely heavily on the Australian contingent of Barry Hindess, Ian Hunter, Jeffrey Minson and others for mutual theoretical sustenance and networking via conferences and preparation of manuscripts. Their ‘History of the Present’ network now extends to a number of universities in Australia, Britain and Canada. As we shall see, this network contains a mixture of former Althusserians, Foucauldian exponents of ‘governmentality’ as well as others who come from various theoretical traditions. Some are still committed to anti-capitalist social change. As ex-radicals of the generation of ’68, most share a dissatisfaction with Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches and display a strong dislike of political romanticism. For example, writers such as Barry Hindess still express a guarded commitment to various forms of democratization. Like Michels in his socialist phase, the Anglo-Foucauldians raise crucial issues concerning the relationship between citizenship, democracy and socialism. Hindess, for example, is also a vigorous critic of Michel’s and others who believe in strong charismatic leaders. Hence, it is very unlikely that the Anglo-Foucauldians’ anti-class analysis and hyper negativity will lead to them following the path that Michels took from disillusionment with democratic socialism to the embrace of fascism. In Telos’ case, however, the so-called transcendence of old distinctions between Left and Right has already involved a journey from 1960s critical theory to an embrace of conservative American populism, European radical Right theories and anti-Left movements such as the Lega Nord.6

The new Realpolitik analysts claim that the Left are still geared to the political economy of a past era and hence fail to either recognize the

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new technologies of regulation, or else advance political programmes that only further processes of bureaucratization and cultural homogenization. It is therefore important to identify those elements in their work that pose serious challenges to the Left as well as highlighting the inherent dangers for social theorists when embracing an eclectic range of social philosophies formerly associated with anti-egalitarian and antidemocratic politics.

The *Telos* Response to Modernization and Globalization

*Telos* has mirrored political developments for almost thirty years. Beginning in Spring 1968, the original *Telos* group of critical theorists started to go their different ways in the 1970s, openly splitting as a result of *Telos*’ opposition to the peace movement in the early 1980s and conflict between editors over attitudes to Marxism and liberalism. It has become barely recognizable from its origins since Paul Piccone, the editor, began devoting more and more space to articles by right-wing authors and promoting populist politics in the late 1980s and 1990s. Nevertheless, certain aspects have not changed. *Telos* has never been connected to actual political movements or struggles. It has always been primarily a journal devoted to the publication and interpretation of European critical theory and social philosophy. This detachment from American politics and social analysis was never adequately overcome by former members of the editorial board. Even its recent heavy championing of American populism is in part achieved through the filter of French, German and Italian right-wing theory and politics. If most of the earlier critical theorists have left the editorial board, this is not to deny a certain logical evolution of Paul Piccone’s early positions into his current embrace of populism. Also, it is important to recognize the defining stamp that Piccone has placed upon *Telos* over the years. As the editor and owner of *Telos*, Piccone is a volatile personality, displaying a mixture of explosive energy, authoritarian dictatorship and open, uninhibited democratic exchange of ideas. It is these very qualities that have made debates in *Telos* interesting and also partially explains why Piccone—in his idiosyncratic manner—has not been frightened to explore and absorb ideas from the Right.

At a socio-political level, it is important not to lose sight of the waning conditions confronting advocates of radical change in the US during the past thirty years. No other capitalist country has yet experienced the degree of depoliticization and fundamental erosion and commodification of a ‘civic culture’ as has the US. The absence of a large labour or social democratic party and the thorough marginalization of left movements is reflected in the inability to halt or reverse neoliberal economic policies and cuts to social programmes. Increased levels of racism, poverty, worsening conditions at work and in communities, as well as the familiar features of urban malaise and political neglect appear intractable. Millions of people who have long since ceased to vote, let alone be active in social

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movements or parties. When these depressing features are put alongside increased cultural commodification, the rampant conspicuous consumption of the past decade and the mass intellectual investment in cultural studies and postmodern theory at the expense of radical politics, it is easier to understand the socio-economic and cultural conditions confronting the Telos group. 8 Although many of the post-Marxian, postmodern responses to contemporary America have comfortably coexisted with neoliberal political and economic policies, most postmodernists and practitioners of cultural studies would see themselves as anti-right-wing. Not so Telos. What is peculiar about the Telos interpretation of American conditions, is the transcendence or synthesis of theoretical explanations from Left and Right.

Spectacular Politics

In his ‘Six Theses on the Inevitability of Populism’, Piccone provides a historical and political framework for his advocacy of populism in America. 9 These theses begin with a pessimistic yet plausible account of the depoliticization and technocratic routine of political participation in the US. According to Piccone, if groups reject this technocratic ‘normality’ they are ignored by the media and dismissed by the bureaucracy. In an age of spectacular politics—not to be confused with Guy Debord’s ‘society of the spectacle’—when the media only pays attention to the extraordinary, political activity tends to take the form of civil disobedience because ordinary protests, marches and meetings are ignored. Moreover, such spectacular politics requires the pre-packaging of political issues to fit the media form. Ambiguities are edited out and the context is assumed as ‘normal’. All politics is reduced to single issues amenable to automatic moralistic formatting and made ready for technocratic processing. Hence only minor alterations are possible as political objectives must be attained within the depoliticizing rules of the game. Technocratic co-optation is thus already prefigured by the very act of spectacularizing politics.

The residues of left critique are also visible in Piccone’s account of Fordism. After World War 1, the strategy of the culture industry to Americanize itself had the aim of forging national identity and a uniform market out of a fragmented multi-ethnic society effectively ruled by a WASP elite and based upon racist and sexist exclusionary mechanisms. This social homogenization greatly facilitated standardized mass oligopolistic capitalist production and ‘American’ consumers, higher standards of living yet abysmal cultural impoverishment. But the Fordist era of cultural and economic homogenization plus military Keynesianism failed to usher in social equality. The ‘rediscovery’ of cultural particularism, prefigured by the culture industry from the mid 1960s, smoothly fed into Lyndon Johnson’s ‘Great Society’ corporatist strategy of enfranchising previously excluded groups to allegedly guarantee formal representation. More importantly, this incorporation strategy diversified the

8 On intellectuals and culture, see, for instance, Todd Gitlin’s Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars, New York 1995.
polity enough to restore a minimal negativity without which the bureaucratic apparatus threatened to choke the productive system into economic paralysis.

Here Piccone is extending his earlier thesis of ‘artificial negativity’—a reworking of the Italian class analyses of Mario Tronti and Serge Bologna into a broader cultural and political interpretation of the role of new social movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Telos promoted a modified version of Italian left theory which saw the conflict over the historical changes from craft workers to the Fordist mass worker as essential to capitalist innovation. Without labour conflict, the bosses would have lost their competitive edge and ceased being innovative. In contrast to Tronti’s Marxism, Piccone’s concept of ‘artificial negativity’ lays the basis for his subsequent move from the Frankfurt School to a right-wing critique of the welfare state. Today, he argues, capitalist relations are no longer questioned but the myth of a totally administered society (Adorno, Marcuse) explodes with the realization that the unintended consequences of social pathologies necessitate ever growing bureaucratic intervention. However, this intervention is counter-productive in that it strengthens the very conditions that gave rise to administrative intervention—poor productivity, motivation, rationality and so forth. Crisis management replaces planning as unforeseen disruptions due to bureaucratic over-administration are ritualistically articulated through civil disobedience—for, example, conflict over abortion, gay rights, racism or school control.

Centralizers Versus Populists

Accordingly, class domination dissipates into class chaos, and political battle lines are redrawn: traditional class struggle between labour and capital is now redefined in terms of new confrontations between populist problems and New Class pseudo-solutions. Thus Piccone sees the main new political divisions as one between centralizers, committed to an
extension of the state redistributive apparatus allegedly meant to solve all social problems—hence ‘victimology’ as the New Class’ favourite mode of ideological self-legitimation—and populists committed to local autonomy, fiscal austerity and participatory forms of democracy. Following Carl Schmitt’s concept of ‘motorized legislation’—what is lawful today may no longer be so tomorrow, thus the need to constantly justify interventions legally via changed legislation—Piccone sees this super-legality resulting in the systematic delegitimation of the social glue that keeps social order together, namely popular trust. Politics as civil disobedience hypostatizes morality above legality and threatens to destroy it. Civil disobedience is exceptional politics and where it replaces normal politics it tends to destroy politics as collective will formation because a clash of values present themselves as non-negotiable. The Left has been a major accomplice in all this. It no longer relates to the real people, the working class, or anybody: it simply addresses Washington in the name of an anonymous, mediatized populace through TV, the newspapers and the demonstrations necessary to attract attention. When it does not feed into this statist logic, it simply deploys super-legality against what it always dismissed anyway as ‘bourgeois legality’. For Piccone, this is a disastrous no-win situation.

Given the breakdown of the old New Deal state in the past decade or so, and besieged by fiscal, ecological and motivational crises, the old legal foundation loses its universal validity and becomes one particular code among others. Reacting against modernizing influences, Telos believes that legality can only be re-legitimated locally, in a context where it can once again re-establish continuity with morality and formalize it. This is because pre-modern modes of organization based on ethnic, national, linguistic and/or religious lines still manage to mediate a great deal of everyday life beneath the bureaucratic glaze and the modernist veneer. Hence, the fashionable sociological calls for the ‘reconstitution of civil society’ are futile: before it can constitute itself as such, ‘civil’ society needs a communitarian structure which no longer exists, and whose reconstitution cannot be formulated as a bureaucratic project—no matter how well funded. In fact, Piccone argues that the experience of the Great Society state intervention to sustain faltering communities is that, far from a catalyst for social reconstruction, this intervention simply accelerates disintegration. He claims that it is no accident that communities subject to the least government intervention, such as the Asian, are thriving, whilst others targeted for maximum penetration such as the Afro-American, continue disintegrating at a rapid pace. Those communities with strong organically developed traditions and customs will thrive, and those which have been homogenized will not.

Piccone’s strange blend of left-wing anti-cultural homogenization and right-wing anti-multiculturalism is evident in his observation that those who claim to be Irish-American, Afro-American and so on still behave exactly like everyone else because they consume the same cultural products. The hyphen is totally irrelevant from the viewpoint of the new logic of domination. Real residual communities that have resisted homogenization are not the ones celebrated by the culture industry. Hence, cultural particularism has deteriorated into an ideology of upwardly mobile middle-class cadres providing advantages to people.
who can readily certify their particularistic ‘oppressed’ identity. As a New Class project, multiculturalism ends up empowering only a multicultural bureaucratic elite to manage the further disintegration of mediatized ‘communities’ they are allegedly helping to reconstitute. Horkheimer and Adorno, he says, traced anti-Semitism to the identity logic of Enlightenment ideology. The culturally recalcitrant Jew, who refused to forfeit his particularity in this process of capitalist homogenization, had to go or be exterminated. Now, the culture industry benignly continues exactly the same project of universal homogenization. Defeated in battle, fascism has won the cultural war. Today, Piccone argues, only a handful of die-hard left intellectuals still rave against the culture industry. Redefined as a respectable academic discipline, ‘popular culture’ has long ceased to be considered as the opiate of the masses.

Paradoxically, Piccone sees the essence of the Frankfurt School critique continued not by the Left, but by French New Right theorists such as Alain Benoist—even though subsumed under the broader critique of the US and its cultural hegemony. Hence, cultural homogenization can only be fought by championing particularistic cultures and strong autonomous communities operating within a new federal legal structure. Populist communitarianism preserves the plurality of organic traditions and necessitates a vigorous opposition to all forms of bureaucratic centralization sponsored by either transnational corporate forces or national New Class welfare professionals and admirers of commercial popular culture.

The Political Miasma of Populism

Piccone combines vestiges of critical theory with American small-town populism, anarchist anti-statism, European right-wing regionalism, nationalist mythology and a profound anti-modernism. Thus, ‘the concrete existence of organic communities in remote corners of the Mid-West or in the mountainous Swiss cantons only means that in these places it is probably much easier to lead a satisfying life within a viable political organization free of the pathologies of modernity: homelessness, criminality, irresponsibility, decadence and ultimately self-destruction.’ The advocacy of strong local communities in opposition to central state bureaucracies has forced Telos to develop theoretical alliances with a range of right-wing socio-cultural forces whose level of intolerance and anti-distributionist politics is incompatible with the residues of egalitarian social justice and cultural openness held by some members of

13 The rejection of cultural homogenization and American capitalism has a long tradition on both Left and Right. For example, on the hundredth anniversary of Nietzsche’s birth, the Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg delivered a speech in Prague in 1944 in which he claimed that National Socialism defends ‘organically grown nations’ against Asiatic nations of the East and American capitalism of the West. See W. von der Will, ‘Nietzsche and National Socialism’, unpublished paper presented at University of California, Berkeley, March 1997. The anti-internationalism of Telos’ championing of ‘organic communities’ also falls back on a similar rhetoric of anti-capitalist homogenization.
the Telos editorial board. But as an intellectual journal engaged in no electoral politics or other organizational politics, the incompatible theoretical marriage of left and right social philosophies is able to survive in the detached pages of Telos rather than in the actual political field. In other words, it is one thing to promote organic communities in Telos, and it is quite another thing to mobilize 'grass roots' forces if these same local constituencies have already been successfully mobilized by Christian fundamentalists, Gingrich's Republicans or a whole range of other organizations in the US and Europe ranging from radical Greens through to survivalist militias. The politically unreal desire to introduce the regionalist model of the Lega Nord to the USA is only one example of the infatuation with Europe of Telos editors who have never been able to come to terms with the dynamics of their own American society.

While Piccone dominates Telos, other contributing editors such as Gary Ulmen, Russell Berman, Frank Adler and Tim Luke have also helped to develop the new theory of populism and federalism, and introduce readers to the European New Right, the works of Carl Schmitt and the history of American populist movements. Because of the mixture of sophisticated, penetrating insights offset by exaggerated generalizations, political naiveté as well as crude obsessiveness, the Telos perspective defies neat classification. Like the work of Christopher Lasch—whose last writings on populism Telos promoted—many of the articles in Telos advance arguments that are simultaneously critical of capitalism and yet culturally quite conservative. Internal differences are also evident as various editors stress particular political issues at the expense of others. For example, Russell Berman reflects the Telos wing that supports populism within a revived sense of 'nationhood' rather than old style nationalism. Like Lasch, Berman believes that universalise internationalism stretches loyalty too thinly and is attacked as profoundly unrealistic and anti-humanistic as it denies all the complexity of lived particularities and identities. As Berman puts it, 'living an ethic of loving-thy-neighbour may be difficult; an ethic of loving everyone simply on the basis of the fact of their human being is impossible. The more such a draconian obligation is asserted, the more resentment it provokes. Local and national ties of loyalty are perpetually loosened, but they are not, and cannot be replaced by a liveable universalist ethic. The willingness for altruistic sacrifice is always concrete and particular; it cannot be inflated through infinite abstraction.' But localism, while preferred by Berman to internationalism, is equally unrealistic. If internationalism denies the finite, then localism is too
row, cutting off humanity from the infinite. Hence, Berman offers ‘nationhood’ as the new mediating arena for localist cultures and new forms of nation-to-nation relations. ‘Nationhood’ will be different to the current forms of nationalism and nation states which are geared to globalization and cultural homogenization. However, Berman is unclear and unconvincing when trying to establish how this abstract concept of ‘nationhood’ can be adequately differentiated from and immunized against the negative aspects of nationalism. For how can the ‘infinite’ qualities of ‘nationhood’ be any more concrete to particular communities than the unlived and so-called unrealistic nature of internationalism? It is impossible to have lived, face-to-face relationships with most citizens in small towns of 20,000 people, let alone ‘nationhoods’ of millions of citizens. Paradoxically, Berman developed his critique of universal internationalism while the very atrocities of Bosnia and former regions of the USSR were fuelled by revived national hatreds. Berman’s attempt to develop a third way between homogenized corporate globalism—which he mistakenly equates with a universalist ethic—and local parochialism, taps into sentiments and fears held by various movements on the Right and Left. Although federalism has had a wide variety of liberal, anarchist, socialist and Green supporters, Berman’s advocacy of ‘nationhood’ and federalism is politically naive. Moreover, it bolsters the dislike which Telos regularly shows for internationalism and especially for those writers such as Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm who discover not the deeply historically rooted ‘organic communities’ of Telos’ dreams, but the relatively recent and invented nature of traditions and ‘imagined communities’.

Rescuing Populism

Although highly critical of postmodern cultural studies, Piccone wishes to sharply delineate ‘postmodern populism’ as he calls it, from the conventional sociological image of populism as a mob of know-nothing farmers in overalls, brandishing pitchforks, lynching blacks and chasing Jews, immigrants and other undesirable elements out of town. He shares Christopher Lasch’s support for populism against the corporate elite, but does not believe that Lasch’s traditional communitarianism can be revived today. Increasingly critical of egalitarian policies, Telos attacks the social democratic, liberal Left for promoting cultural homogenization under the guise of multiculturalism and the welfare state. Accordingly, corporate America and transnational capitalism encounter no genuine opposition. Here Telos extrapolates from the undoubted complicity of social democratic and labour parties in

19 Ibid., pp. 49–52.
20 See, for instance, P. Piccone, ‘Beyond Pseudo-Culture? Reconstituting Fundamental Political Concepts’, Telos, no. 95, Spring 1993, p. 13. According to Piccone, Anderson and Hobsbawm represent the cynical Enlightenment tradition furthering the New Class and the ‘inevitable descent to a classless society’. He also argues that ‘whereas nationalism was once a right-wing predilection opposed to leftist cosmopolitanism, in the age of postmodern fragmentation it is the Left as redefined by the New Class that, since the theoretization of “socialism in one country”, has turned conservative and has become the most committed defender of statism, managerialism and the status quo in general.’ ‘Secession or Reform? The Case of Canada’, Telos, no. 106, Winter 1996, pp. 46–7.
the furtherance of global and national corporate accumulation practices. Hence, *Telos*’ response is to support populist culture against popular culture.

In contrast to many critics of neoliberalism who nostalgically and uncritically long for a restoration of the welfare state services and economy of the three decades after 1945, *Telos* theorists at least raise the major negative consequences of global corporatism that have their origin in the Keynesian welfare-warfare economy. They are also particularly sensitive to the mediatization or ‘spectacular’ nature of contemporary bi-partisan politics and how political opposition is coopted or rendered ineffective. The criticism of former leftists become cultural studies aficionados, while full of conservative hyperbole, nevertheless occasionally hits the mark—a testimony to the lack of radical critique in popular culture and its disciples. Moreover, the recognition that the values and lifestyles of the dominant government and corporate decision-makers are seriously at odds with large cross-sections of the electorate in countries such as the US and Australia, is amply illustrated on a daily basis.

This ‘revolt of the elites’—as Lasch terms it—raises a whole series of questions about the contemporary meaning of citizenship and democracy. Piccone’s belief in populism as the panacea to the contemporary malaise is itself symptomatic of the larger issue that has confronted all advocates of a ‘third way’ between capitalist welfare states and one-party bureaucratic dictatorships since the 1950s. More specifically, it reinforces that old dilemma which has continually challenged the Left, namely, how to develop appropriate strategies that are actively supported by the mass of the population. How does the Left avoid policies that unintentionally strengthen homogenizing and disempowering corporate and bureaucratic forces? How does it avoid repeating *Telos*’ direct and indirect support for a whole variety of reactionary movements and authoritarian values? In other words, is it possible for the Left to avoid right-wing populist values and yet gain the support of those workers and grass-roots constituencies who have a ‘sense of place’, fear losing their jobs, services and communities as businesses go ‘off-shore’ to low-wage countries, and blame either immigrants, feminists, gays or Greens for destroying ‘their culture’?

Right-Wing Prejudices in a ‘Critical Theory’ Framework

Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s *Telos* promoted left-wing European social philosophy, its recent conversion to the agendas of various right-wing nationalists, regionalists and cultural traditionalists is primarily driven by a culturalist agenda which in key respects mirrors the disregard that many postmodernist cultural studies practitioners have for political economy. What is noteworthy about *Telos*’ conversion from left-wing critique of capitalist culture to right-wing opposition to European corporatism and American global cultural homogenization,

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is that all its socio-political editorial judgements are now filtered through the prism of ‘organic communal culture’. *Telos*’ right-wing communitarianism is in marked contrast to the recent articulation of liberal and social democratic communitarianism and ‘social capital’ theories that also express alarm over the way free-market individualist culture is destroying public institutions, values of communal solidarity, trust and care. Similarly, *Telos* shows some interest in environmental issues as part of its populist agenda, but it turns its back on the communitarian philosophies of the German Greens and other left and anti-capitalist social movement critics of cultural homogenization. Why is this so?

Reflecting the dominant American individualist culture—despite their trumpeting of communitarianism—Piccone and company turn their backs on left egalitarian and social justice strategies. Since the 1970s, there has been a resurgence of anti-statist currents going well beyond free-market individualism. All kinds of ‘backlash’ populists, agrarian fascists or Christian populist militia—who wage war on ‘the Zionist occupation government’ in Washington—are symptomatic of something more complex than what sociologists call ‘a reaction against modernity’. The proliferation of both violent and peaceful anti-government movements, cults and philosophies is also testimony to the impasse in American politics. With the established party system, committed to market restructuring that guarantees further massive disruption and pain to workers and their families, and the inability of left oppositional groups to effect change through the institutional structure, it is little wonder that authoritarian and religious forms of populism attempt to surmount this impasse. Thus anti-statism and anti-egalitarianism feed off one another and become indispensable ingredients of the *Telos* agenda. Given this right-wing anti-statism—and having long abandoned its flirtation with anti-statist currents of unorthodox Marxism—it is only logical that *Telos* should now be attracted to all sorts of cultural particularists—from the Northern Leagues in Italy, the French right-wing advocates of cultural difference against the EU, to the residues of organic communitarianism in the US, whether black religious groups or the same constituencies mobilized by the Republican Right but minus Republican politicians. Not surprisingly, *Telos* supports the European New Right’s slogan of a Europe of a hundred flags and regions against homogenized nation states and a homogenized EU. Thus, several major weaknesses, unacceptable prejudices and implausible scenarios recur in *Telos* articles.

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23 For a survey of the connections between the works of Schmitt, Junger et al. and European Rightists from Benoist in France to Zhirinovski in Russia and *Telos* in the US, see G. Dahl, ‘Will “The Other God” Fail Again? On the Possible Return of the Conservative Revolution’, *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1996, pp. 25–50. Dahl also draws attention to the way the European New Right has used post-structuralist theory to support its campaign for cultural difference against the supranationalism of the European Union. Postmodernists are either attacked as the enemy or used to bolster conservative agendas. The ambivalence of postmodernism and identity politics—that is, their compatibility with either greater democratization and multiculturalism or anti-universalism and right-wing nationalist and communal intolerance—is becoming more evident. See also Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe*, New York 1994, for a survey of how various right-wing movements have responded to globalization and European integration.
Weaknesses in the Telos Approach

First, there is the obsessive attack on what Piccone and colleagues call the ‘New Class’ of professionals in government, the universities and the corporate sector. Sociologically and politically, there is little to distinguish Telos’ polemical use of this term from the very same concept used by conservative and New Right anti-welfare state ideologues and think tanks. Piccone deploys half-truths and caricatures to homogenize a whole variety of socio-political perspectives, occupations and varying roles in the public and private sectors. Because the ‘New Class’ is demonized in such a crude manner, the causal relationship drawn between the problems debilitating American society and their possible solution, leads to an increasingly right-wing politics. Typical of this demonization of the ‘New Class’ is Piccone’s repetition of free-market propaganda about how the destruction of local communities is attributable to bureaucratic intervention rather than mass unemployment, poverty and lack of cultural capital. Telos echoes the dominant ideology of self-help individualism in a society that has one of the least developed welfare states in the OECD. Piccone’s notion of self-reliance is a throwback to the austere Protestant ethic. The promotion of voluntary associations and charitable bodies such as the Salvation Army as substitutes for a comprehensive public welfare system merely confirms Piccone’s complete lack of empathy with the poor and the unemployed—whom he describes as ‘addictive beneficiaries’—a typical manifestation of his obsessive hatred of welfare states. Other Telos writers such as Robert Bresler voice a whole set of extreme right-wing views—attacking left-wing academics, gay studies, women’s studies, multiculturalism—and concluding with a warning that populist anger will be white hot if Gingrich’s Republican Congress produces more ‘timid centrism’.

Underpinning Telos’ move to the Right is the absence of a feasible alternative political economic model that could effectively counter corporate globalism and deliver communitarian forms of local democracy. Piccone and company ultimately fall back on the small-scale capitalist system because they have no political economy of redistribution. Given Telos’ lack of interest in universal citizen rights, there is little thought given to what social rights citizens would have inside and outside their organic

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24 See my discussion of the concept ‘New Class’ in From The Prophets Deserts Come, Melbourne 1992, ch. 3.

25 See P. Piccone, ‘Introduction’, Telos, no. 106, Winter 1996, p. 6 where he endorses the right-wing call to dismantle Canada’s federal welfare system in order to solve the debt problem. Also Telos Staff, ‘Nationhood, Nationalism and Identity: A Symposium’, Telos, no. 105, Fall 1995, p. 102. This symposium highlights the varying positions of Telos editors and is notable for Piccone’s libertarian attack on state schooling, a tolerance of all forms of particularisms—whether Nazism, creationism or religious fundamentalism—in the name of a ‘living culture of the people’ so long as it is not the ‘abstract universalism of the bureaucratic elite’ (p. 105).


27 As a sign of their embrace of small-business populism, their 1991 Elizabethtown conference sponsors included the Institute for Business and Society and the Young American Federation. Telos justified this by claiming that there is a ‘growing realization on the part of some organizations previously associated with the Right that the old Right/Left distinction is no longer meaningful and a redrawing of the political lines is overdue.’ ‘The Second Elizabethtown Conference’, p. 7.
communities and what administrative—as opposed to legal mechanisms—would be necessary to prevent mass discrimination, poverty and social injustice.

While *Telos* attacks the homogenized popular culture created by corporations, it is utterly naive to believe that local small businesses can constitute a serious challenge to the dominant power of transnational corporations. Solving the problems of mass unemployment, decaying urban infrastructure or the absence of natural resources and local sources of employment and production, requires a conception of the macro-economic processes of production, distribution and coordination that extend well beyond the local unit. Moreover, the creation of a genuine communitarian society would entail the promotion of clear alternatives to the existing military-industrial complex, and to the mass unemployment and crisis in profitability that would result from its dismantling. Yet, all these elementary forms of political economy are absent from populist proposals as they vehemently reject socialist, social democratic or eco-socialists models but opt for the illusory panacea of small-business and voluntarism.

As defensive strategies against the steam-rolling bureaucratic practices of supranational and national administrative and economic forces, various community, associational, federal and regional movements *do* hold part of the answer to a more democratic politics—but only if such defences do not become parochial, exclusive or possessive. Habermas notes that one of the virtues of contemporary welfare states in Western Europe is that nationalist bonding has been modified by the progressive inclusion of the population as citizens. New forms of ‘legally mediated solidarity’ have emerged as the democratic process has guaranteed social integration via the entitlement to social rights and the provision of social services. So far, most models of decentralized or self-sufficient communities have failed to specify how the millions of people currently provided with welfare incomes and services—a situation that is far from generous or adequate—will survive or feel included if alternative organic communities and associations lack the requisite local fiscal, material and organizational resources or are principally based on notions of ethnic or racial exclusivity.

Not surprisingly, *Telos* is attracted to the Lega Nord and French New Right critique of neoliberalism in the name of local and regional traditional forms of business and unequal communities. But exclusive regional or nationalist strategies are relatively powerless to stem cultural homogenization or prevent the destruction of community practices that *Telos* values. Whether it be Quebec or Northern Italy, populists will have little power to change social relations if the same corporations currently dominating these regional economies continue to operate in the newly revived ‘organic communities’. *Telos* fails to confront the reality that federalism within the EU will either be a continuation of a Europe dominated by big corporations, or the creation of a federation of states or regions based upon an extension of universal social legislation and publicly controlled productive forces. European, Australian and even

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American citizens are not going to support the complete dismantling of social welfare provisions and public-sector employment in the name of abstract ‘lived communities’ that will leave the field totally free for market forces to exacerbate already grossly inadequate investment in public welfare and community facilities.

We, the (Homogeneous) People

As mentioned earlier, Telos displays a paradoxical commitment to a mixture of open libertarian values and narrow, sexist, ethnic, homophobic and other conservative prejudices. Endorsing Schmitt’s belief in the ‘substantial homogeneity of the whole people’ as the precondition of parliamentary government, Piccone and Ulmen argue that ‘preference to European rather than Asian or African immigrants is not necessarily racist. There is a cultural dimension to the social composition of the US, and the desire to maintain a Western society with a Judeo-Christian profile is neither irrational nor xenophobic.’

Try selling this to Native Americans, members of Black Islamic communities, Asian Americans of various backgrounds and a whole range of Hispanic Americans! Not only does Telos’ attitude to immigrants sound disturbingly similar to that of mono-cultural racists and chauvinists in Europe, Australia, Asia and North America, but it also stands for a world characterized by social immobility and parochial exclusiveness. Telos has failed to come to terms with the legacy of mass migration in recent decades and either refuses to recognize the rights of immigrant communities, or opts for intolerant assimilationist policies—an ever-reliable sign of fear and prejudice.

Ultimately, Piccone’s organic communities are no more capable of leading a postmodern populist revival than Lasch’s nostalgic nineteenth-century forms of populism. Criticizing former Telos editors, Andrew Arato, Jean Cohen and John Keane—who, as admirers of Habermas, he calls ‘Habermaniacs’—Piccone argues that the ‘reconstitution of civil society’ is impossible without first developing communitarianism. Conversely, one may ask how is it possible for intolerant right-wing populists and religious fundamentalists to suddenly transform themselves into tolerant local democrats and create a new pluralist civic culture? The older members of the Frankfurt School theorized themselves into the cul-de-sac of the ‘totally administered society’—thus making it impossible to identify the historical subjects who would break through capitalist reification. Similarly, Piccone himself argued in the late 1970s that the ‘organic negativity’ necessary to challenge bureaucratic ‘artificial negativity’ no longer existed since both the organic community and the non-homogenized individual had been destroyed by the culture industry and the capitalist production and administrative system.

Leaving aside the whole issue of what constitutes an ‘organic community’, it is clear that even Piccone vaguely recognizes that mass political opposition cannot be manufactured by theorists craving for commercial-free, uncontaminated ‘communities’.


Despite his belief that the Lega Nord has found a face-to-face political style that surmounts ‘one-dimensional’, ‘total administration’ theory, Piccone still feels uneasy about the organizational authoritarianism of leaders such as Umberto Bossi. Still, it is the Lega Nord’s championing of the federal model that makes Piccone suspend fundamental criticism of Bossi and his populists. As Piccone puts it: ‘The federal model today constitutes the only rational compromise between the multicultural chaos and subsequent bureaucratic domination of existing liberal democracies and the monoethnic dogmatism of post-communist societies or National-Socialist regimes seeking a return to pre-modern pseudo-alternatives.’

But how ‘organic communities’ are going to avoid the politics of ‘monoethnic dogmatism’ if multiculturalism is rejected remains a mystery. Like his current hero Carl Schmitt—who opted for the authoritarian order of the Third Reich in preference to the ‘democratic chaos’ of Weimar—Piccone postulates contemporary problems in terms of overcoming chaos and ‘motorized legislation’ caused by the interventionist welfare state.

According to Piccone and Ulmen, Telos has fused ‘Husserl’s critique of the crisis of modern science, Schmitt’s critique of legal positivism, Marx/Lukács’ critique of reification, and Adorno/Horkheimer’s critique of instrumental reason’ with more recent populist and right-wing critiques of the ‘New Class’ and centralizing states. The rightward march of critical theory thus ends up in a romantic notion of the ‘organic community’ and the thinly disguised politics of resentment—for example, Telos’ obsessive hatred of reforms such as affirmative action. Like Carl Schmitt’s choice of fascism over disorder, Piccone and company make a decisionist leap, a vitalist critique of American disorder and malaise in the name of the ‘local people’. But the mythical or real ‘organic popular folk’, whom Telos theorists have now substituted for the proletariat as the subject and object of radical change, would most likely reject these ‘big city’ intellectuals as ‘rootless cosmopolitan’ members of the very same professional elite that Telos disparagingly calls the ‘New Class’. In registering the populist voices of nostalgia, disempowerment, resentment and loss, Telos reminds us that ‘politics from above’—whether of the Left or the Right—exacts a high price if not adequately connected to ‘politics from below’.

Unable to resist the narrow values and politics of parochial forces—because Piccone and colleagues are themselves compromised by dogmatic prejudices—Telos has now gone beyond the point of no return. The

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conditions of American capitalism have long produced myriad forms of rage and political impotency. As Adorno and Horkheimer, two of Telos’ earlier heroes, observed:

A child’s ceaseless queries are always symptoms of a hidden pain, of a first question to which it found no answer and which it did not know how to frame appropriately... If the child’s repeated attempts are balked, or too brutally frustrated, it may turn its attention in a different direction. It is then richer in experience, as the saying goes, but an imperceptible scar, a tiny callused area of insensitivity, is apt to form at the spot where the urge was stifled. Such scars lead to deformities. They can build hard and able characters; they can breed stupidity—as a symptom of pathological deficiency, of blindness and impotency, if they are quiescent; in the form of malice, spite, and fanaticism, if they produce a cancer within.'

In an America characterized by the absence of a strong left mass oppositional movement, Telos’ right turn to populism is hardly an exceptional event. All kinds of gurus, left and right sects, apocalyptic prophets and quacks are levelled by the market. Like most of the other brands, Telos’ ‘organic populism’ may attract disillusioned customers by offering another pseudo-panacea to cure America’s ills. But it will probably incur the same fate of political impotence as other theories in search of a mass movement.

Anglo-Foucauldians and the New Resigned Pessimism

If Telos is obsessed with local autonomy and popular sovereignty, the Foucauldian Realpolitik analysts rely partially on Schmitt’s critique of political romanticism to dismiss the socialist and liberal idea of self-governing communities as utopian, and to show why the notion of a fully developed self-reflective and self-determining subject is equally unreal. Like Telos, the Anglo-Foucauldians attack universalist ideas, but do so from quite different theoretical positions. This critique of universalism leads them to also attack ‘totalizing’ theories such as those advocated by Telos and critical theorists. While the ‘governmentality’ theorists are equally preoccupied with the welfare state, they do not engage in polemics against the ‘New Class’. Interestingly enough, Lasch’s critique of social welfare experts in Haven in a Heartless World was published in the same year as Jacques Donzelot’s Foucauldian analysis, The Policing of Families. Rose and Miller go beyond Donzelot’s concept of ‘government through the family’. This is because Donzelot’s late 1970s genealogy was still written under the sway of Keynesian welfare

36 This is a central theme in the work of Ian Hunter. See, for example, Rethinking the School, Sydney 1994.
state systems even though the English edition was published in the year that Thatcher came to power. The Anglo-Foucauldians write a decade later after neoliberalism has given rise to the concept of self-regulated forms of ‘governmentality’ which, Rose claims, have begun to replace central bureaucratic forms of policing by experts.

The *Economy and Society* or ‘governmentality’ theorists are post-Marxists indebted to Foucault, Weber and Nietzsche. But there are significant variations in their primary object of analysis and also in their level of commitment to social change. Rose’s critique, *Governing the Soul*, emerges from his long work in social psychology. Hindess focuses on democratic theory and power which is an extension of his earlier engagement with Marxist politics. Hunter, Minson and others based at Griffith University in Brisbane are preoccupied with schooling, bureaucracy and ethics. They are possibly the most conservative of the group. Minson, like Hindess and others, are refugees from Thatcher’s Britain and were supportive of the Hawke and Keating 1983 to 1996 Labor governments, even though Labor implemented many neoliberal socio-economic reforms. In a political climate that saw widespread criticisms of senior bureaucrats for their attack upon public services and the promotion of market liberal restructuring, Hunter, Minson and Meredyth became notorious for their role as leading apologists for bureaucracy and the neoliberal Dawkins reforms of universities in Australia. These reforms subjected intellectual activity and organizational structures to narrow forms of accountability informed by productivist and neoliberal market practices.

It is difficult to ascertain the political commitments of several less prominent members of the ‘History of the Present’ network. This is because their work is largely characterized by textual analyses of Foucault and straight applications of neo-Foucauldian theory to topics

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38 For example, Tony Bennett and Colin Mercer—former Gramscians—who, through the Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, now heavily criticized Marxist culture critique and promoted the training of cultural policy technicians in tourism and popular culture industries. This instrumental and productivist concept of culture is closely tied to Hunter and Minson’s eulogy of bureaucracy and conventional politics and, up until 1996, fitted in perfectly with the new market approach adopted by the Hawke and Keating governments. For further discussion, see my analysis in *From The Prophets Deserts Come*, ch. 7. On the Australian Labour governments, see my essay ‘Beyond Labourism and Socialism: How the Australian Labor Party Developed the Model of “New Labour”’, NLR 221, pp. 3–33.

39 See, for example, I. Hunter and J. Minion, ‘The Good Bureaucrat’, *Australian Left Review*, November 1992, pp. 26–30, and D. Meredyth, ‘Humanists and Rationalists’, *Australian Left Review*, May 1992, pp. 12–16. These were part of a concentrated attack upon Michael Pusey’s influential anti-neoliberal work entitled *Economic Rationalism in Canberra*, Melbourne 1991. It is important to note that *Australian Left Review* was under the editorship of David Burchell—also now a member of the ‘History of the Present’ network—and ceased being Marxist as it became an apologist for Labor government policies in the last years of its life.

ranging from schooling and alcoholism to mental patients and the unemployed.\textsuperscript{41} Others, most notably Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, have had long personal and intellectual associations with Hindess and Rose. Yet, their economic and political analyses have so far been largely free of the 'governmentality' approach—although Thompson has become editor of \textit{Economy and Society} and is a joint convenor of the 'History of the Present' network in London. Like some other members of the \textit{Economy and Society} editorial board, Thompson and Hirst sustain an overt commitment to liberal left politics and analysis.\textsuperscript{42} Although Hirst is also attracted to Schmitt’s critique of political romanticism, he scathingly dismisses the ‘postmodernist’ intelligentsia that ‘frivolously and half-comprehendingly follows Derrida, Foucault and Lacan…’\textsuperscript{43} According to Hirst: ‘An intelligentsia safe enough in its Western cities and campuses, denied comforting myths about history and the working class, deprived of functions by mass culture and mass administration, has little left but to make political despair, relativism and the end of intellectual and moral order the occasion for its own political tristesse.’\textsuperscript{44} As I will discuss later, Hirst’s work is itself criticized as being ‘politically romantic’. Hence, given these political differences, rather than attempt a detailed survey of the diverse output of the Anglo-Foucauldians, I will concentrate on key aspects of their theory.

**Dominant Characteristics of Advanced Liberalism**

Since the publication of his book \textit{Governing the Soul},\textsuperscript{45} Nikolas Rose has developed his new theory of power via a series of articles, some written jointly with Peter Miller.\textsuperscript{46} Recently, Rose’s earlier arguments have assumed a more totalizing form as outlined in articles such as ‘The Death of the Social? Refiguring the Territory of Government’.\textsuperscript{47} According to Rose, over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, early forms of liberalism gave way to a new formula of rule called ‘the state of welfare’. The authority of expertise became inextricably linked to the formal political apparatus of rule in attempts to tame and govern the undesir-

\textsuperscript{41} See, for example, the work of M. Dean, D. Tyler, D. McCallum, T. Osborne, M. Valverde and others. For a number of these people, as the fashions changed from Marxism in the 1970s to Foucauldian analysis in the 1980s, so the concepts in their academic papers changed without any noticeable departure from their politically detached scholarly manner.

\textsuperscript{42} While Hirst and Thompson refer to the writings of the Anglo-Foucauldians, their recent political economic work, for example, \textit{Globalization in Question}, Cambridge 1996, is not dependent on the ‘governmentality’ framework. Also, unlike \textit{Telos} of recent years, \textit{Economy and Society} publishes a variety of perspectives despite the prominent space given to the Anglo-Foucauldians.


\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p. 137. While rejecting Habermas’s rational society and his critique of Schmitt, Hirst endorses Habermas for his loathing of the ‘postmodernist’ intelligentsia. But, he argues, ‘Carl Schmitt provided a clear diagnosis of the “postmodernist” political romantic even as he wrote about Adam Muller.’ (Ibid.)


able consequences of industrial life, wage labour and urban existence. Solidarity was re-established by expert authority. This process was achieved not so much by the central state extending its tentacles throughout society, but by 'the invention of various 'rules for rule' which sought to transform the state into a centre that could programme—shape, guide, channel, direct, control—events and persons distant from it. Persons and activities were to be governed through society, that is to say, through acting upon them in relation to a social norm, and constituting their experiences and evaluations in a social form.'

In recent years, this liberal type of 'state of welfare' has begun to be actively replaced with new forms of rule, which Rose calls advanced liberalism. If earlier liberal states were characterized by government through 'the social'—'the social' being equivalent to the single territorial space of the nation—advanced liberalism is increasingly relying upon technologies and expertise of 'government through community'. Rose does not argue that the forms of administration and policies associated with 'the social' have disappeared. Rather, the new advanced liberal technologies or rationalities coexist with earlier forms of the welfare state and the policies adopted by supra-national bodies such as the European Union. But in countries such as Britain and Australia, 'the social' is increasingly giving way to 'the community' as the new territory for the administration of individual and collective existence. In other words, Thatcherism and other neoliberal regimes 'detach the substantive authority of expertise from the apparatuses of political rule, relocating experts within a market governed by the rationalities of competition, accountability and consumer demand.'

In contrast to Telos theorists who polemicize against the 'New Class' of experts who supposedly intervene and destroy organic communities, the 'governmentality' theorists argue that in the past twenty years these centralized forms of bureaucratic expertise have themselves begun to be replaced by advanced liberal technologies of rule. It is the 'community' that becomes the new plane upon which micro-moral relations among persons are conceptualized and administered. According to Rose, the spatial and ethical 'de-totalization' of 'the social' is evident in the following:

First, government from the 'social point of view' entailed an organically interconnected society and a politico-ethical form in the notion of social citizenship. Today, in contrast, a diversity of heterogeneous and overlapping 'communities' is thought to actually or potentially command our allegiance. They may be based on moral communities—say, religious or feminist—or lifestyle communities involving dress and modes of life, or communities of commitment to local activism, health problems and disabilities. Some may be defined by geographical locales and others may be 'virtual communities' based upon symbols, networks and identities that conform to no one place or time. While most of these diverse 'communities' are to be found within larger collectivities such as the nation state, it is the new forms of identity and allegiance that give rise

49 Ibid.
50 N. Rose, 'Death of the Social?', p. 333.
to much contemporary political disputation over the meaning of citizenship, given the plethora of competing loyalties and assertion of exclusive ‘rights’. Programmes of mass schooling, public housing, broadcasting and social welfare had at their heart the image of a socially identified citizen. By contrast, the vocabulary and identity of ‘community’ appears less remote, more direct and less politically artificial. But the moral pluralism which issues from the proliferation of multiple identities and loyalties—for example, ethnic communities, people with AIDS or local residents—gives rise to new forms of administration, ethical commitments and forms of identity.

Government Through Community

Second, ‘government through community’ thus involves ‘a variety of strategies for inventing and instrumentalizing these dimensions of allegiance between individuals and communities in the service of projects of regulation, reform or mobilization.’ Neoliberal regimes promote diverse ‘communities’ having choice, control over their own fate, self-regulation, ‘empowerment’, personal responsibility and so forth. These qualities simultaneously fit in with pro-market policies that cut central and local welfare services while mobilizing ‘communities’ to take greater responsibility in looking after themselves. By activating personal commitment and moral affinity with ‘communities’ based upon health problems, kinship, religion, residence, and so forth, ‘community’ becomes ‘not simply the territory of government, but a means of government: its ties, bonds, forces, and affiliations are to be celebrated, encouraged, nurtured, shaped, and instrumentalized in the hope of producing consequences that are desirable for all and for each.’

Rose gives two examples of this new process. One is related to health promotion strategies in the gay community which simultaneously involved self-help organizations, logics of inclusion and exclusion and processes encouraging responsibility and autonomy. The other example of ‘government through community’ is the promotion of inner city renewal schemes based upon ‘community’ entrepreneurship and ‘communal pride’. In short, activating diverse ‘communities’ can give rise to new political contests as activist organizations demand new programmes, resources or policies. It can also lead to new forms of government regulation and control as ‘communities’ are instrumentalized and made the means whereby former national programmes are gutted and reconstituted via the symbolic language and technologies of rule through ‘communities’.

Third, we are witnessing the desocialization of economic government. During the first sixty years of the twentieth century, a whole set of social insurance, unemployment policies, tax regimes, tariff and interest rate mechanisms were established to better manage the labour market and increase productivity and social integration. Following Hindess and others, Rose argues that, given the development of large transnational markets, economic relations are no longer synonymous with national economies. Although ‘ruling parties still have to manage national

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51 Ibid., p. 334.
52 Ibid., p. 335.
populations with the territorialized political machinery available to them, they no longer conceive of themselves as operating upon a naturally functioning and systematically integrated national population whose “social” coherence is a condition for its economic security.\textsuperscript{53} Accordingly, the economic fate of citizens within a national territory are now uncoupled from one another as ‘government of the social’ gives way to government of particular zones—regions, towns, sectors, communities—in the interests of economic circuits which flow between regions and across national boundaries.\textsuperscript{54} Hence, citizens and enterprises are increasingly urged to develop and promote their own skills, flexibility and entrepreneurship. For example, unemployment policies are replaced by schemes such as the Australian ‘Working Nation’, whereby the unemployed are required to enhance and package themselves and their own economic capital so that they become ‘job ready’. The privatization of risk becomes incorporated into public benefit entitlements and targeted groups—Aborigines, migrants, youth—help refine the new forms of regulation.\textsuperscript{55}

With the social and the economic now seen as antagonistic, Rose points to a whole series of social apparatuses that are to be restructured in the image of the market. Economic government ‘is to be desocialized in the name of maximizing the entrepreneurial comportment of the individual.’\textsuperscript{56} Utilizing the work of Pat O’Malley in Melbourne, Rose notes the increasing self-reliance upon Neighbourhood Watch and other forms of local policing, the replacement of social insurance policies with private medical insurance, private superannuation for private pensions and so forth.\textsuperscript{57} Alongside these new forms of self-regulation are the new government definitions of inclusiveness and marginalization. The subjects of government are no longer a common social group. Inclusive ‘communities of consumption’ are subjected to highly managed regulation of the minutiae of private life—for example, healthy, non-addictive lifestyles, dietary and fitness regimes. Identity politics and ‘community’ self-regulation are not based upon earlier forms of government intervention by experts but rather involve the active exercise of individual consumer choice. The ‘inclusive communities’ whose lifestyle is determined by various forms of private consumption, insurance, health promotion and so on, are demarcated from the high risk and marginalized ‘anti-communities’ found in decaying council estates and the shop doorways of inner cities. A plethora of quasi-autonomous agencies are now working within these ‘savage spaces’, with the ‘anti-communities’ on the margins. Voluntary workers, private profitable outfits, hostels, old peoples homes, private agencies ‘training’ the unemployed—all are replacing or reducing welfare bureaucracies because the management of misery can become potentially profitable.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p. 330.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 339.
\textsuperscript{56} Rose, ‘Death of the Social?’, p. 340.
\textsuperscript{58} Rose, ‘Death of the Social?’ pp. 346–7.
Finally, Rose outlines in detail a range of new technologies of govern-
ment that make possible the move from social solidarity to privatized
constructions of self, security, inclusion and marginalization. If pro-
fessionals were able to regulate welfare clients as part of mass, centralized
social programmes, advanced liberalism changes the relationship be-
tween the centre and the experts on the one hand, and the application of
expertise on the other. Professional conduct codes, litigious actions and
review bodies have all helped to change the management of profession-
als. But it is the allocation of budgetary and audit responsibilities to pro-
fessionals in hospitals, educational institutions and a raft of public bodies
that transforms the role of experts. Professionals are now required ‘to cal-
culate their actions not in the esoteric languages of their own expertise
but by translating them into costs and benefits that can be given an
accounting value.’\(^{59}\) The decentralization of responsibility onto the
shoulders of professionals is not to be confused with the devolution of
power. The audit may open professional activity to public scrutiny, but
the prevalent effect is to require a plethora of cost centres to conform to
central controls—a market logic that transforms expert knowledge into
technical language conforming also to the logic of the accountant. Not
surprisingly, it is the ill, the disadvantaged and the public consumers
of services who directly confront the consequences of cost-cutting mech-
anism. Professionals are increasingly forced to adjust their expertise
to the new forms of rule—for example, by rationing their time with
patients, engaging in fund raising, making the user pay or stretching the
meagre dollar further as budgetary criteria start to bite.

Attacking the ‘Obsolete’ Language of Marxism

In their detailed documentation of the new rationalities and technologies
implemented by neoliberal regimes, Rose and other ‘governmentalists’
have many excellent and perceptive insights to offer us. My quarrel is
not with their recognition of the manner in which market values and the
technologies of ‘government through community’ are tied to the active,
neo-conservative pursuit of individual, family and group notions of iden-
tity, autonomy, self-fulfilment and choice. As Graham Burchell notes,
the Thatcher and Major governments in the UK are not to be understood
as merely ‘rolling back the State’. They were also very inventive in con-
structing new forms of ‘enterprise’ in a whole host of areas and institu-
tions. ‘Government increasingly impinges upon individuals in their very
individuality, in their practical relationships to themselves in the con-
duct of their lives; it concerns them at the very heart of themselves by
making its rationality the condition of their active freedom.’\(^{60}\) These
subtle analyses of the active participation of ‘communities’ and indivi-
duals in the transformation of the mass organized ‘Keynesian welfare
state’ are necessary correctives to all those who only advance conspira-
torial and coercive theories of market fundamentalism, homogenous
and crude notions of the ‘New Class’, or nostalgic desires for the return
to a less differentiated, common set of public and individual services
and identities.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., p. 351.
22, no. 3, 1993, p. 276. This theme is elaborated in detail by Rose in Governing the Soul.
Insofar as the Anglo-Foucauldians help us to come to terms with important socio-cultural, political and economic changes, their work contains much that is valuable. But ‘governmentality’ theory also has an explicitly anti-Marxist and implicitly anti-socialist and anti-radical sting in its tail. While it is not desirable to return to a politics or to forms of administration that were associated with the suppression or lack of recognition of a whole range of ethnic, sexual, cultural, medical and ecological movements and identities, this is not equivalent to writing off those necessary universalistic political objectives that overcome the often uncooperative and inward looking aspect of identity politics.

Pursuing a Foucauldian critique of ‘totalizing’ theory, Barry, Osborne and Rose state that: ‘Diagnosis of the present is a fraught exercise; all too often in social theory the temptation has been to impose some overbearing, melancholy singularity upon our present—"late capitalism", "post-modernity", "the risk society".’ However, instead of succumbing to what Rose and the ‘governmentality’ theorists call ‘such excessive and portentous interpretations’, they offer instead their own ‘overbearing, excessive, portentous and singular concept’, that of ‘advanced liberalism’. In fact, the concept ‘advanced liberalism’ has many of the ‘totalizing’ qualities of parallel Marxian concepts such as ‘primitive capitalism’ and ‘advanced capitalism’ that the ‘governmentalists’ reject. And this is precisely the strength of Rose’s analysis, despite his deluded assumption that he—like other ‘governmentality’ theorists—is not engaged in a ‘totalizing’ analysis of neoliberal regimes. For how otherwise is he able to comprehend the ‘death of the social’ and the emergence of ‘government through community’?

In highlighting the way Foucauldian analysis is privileged over what the ‘governmentalists’ see as the inadequacy of Marxism, I do not wish to engage in an orthodox or pedantic defence of Marxism. Much more is at stake here. Take for example, Miller and Rose’s sweeping proclamation concerning the obsolescence of Marxist and liberal analyses. As they put it:

The political vocabulary structured by oppositions between state and civil society, public and private, government and market, coercion and consent, sovereignty and autonomy, and the like, does not adequately characterize the diverse ways in which rule is exercised in advanced liberal democracies. Political power is exercised today through a profusion of shifting alliances between diverse authorities in projects to govern a multitude of facets of economic activity, social life and individual conduct. Power is not so much a matter of imposing constraints upon citizens as ‘of making up’ citizens capable of bearing a kind of regulated freedom. Personal autonomy is not the antithesis of political power, but a key term in its exercise, the more so because most individuals are not merely subjects of power but play a part in its operations.


If Miller and Rose are simply referring to the way that ‘the state’ or public-sector institutions have long ceased being mere political-administrative apparatuses and are actively engaged in market and non-market practices belonging to what many Marxists and liberals call ‘the economy’ and ‘civil society’, then there is little to argue about. But questioning the boundaries of ‘the state’ and ‘civil society’ is not equivalent to abandoning the distinction between public and private, coercion and consent or even crucial enduring differences between governments and market forces. Like Telos, which now rejects Marxian political economy for ‘scape-goating capitalism’ as the cause of contemporary problems, the Anglo-Foucauldians equally do everything possible to deodorize anything that smells of Marxian or neo-Marxian political economy. This has long been evident in their fundamental shift from Althusserian Marxism in the early 1970s to various forms of anti-epistemological, anti-foundationalist theories from the late 1970s onwards.

The Bath-Water of Marxism

But whereas Cutler, Hirst, Hussain and Hindess were still vitally concerned, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with analyzing the dynamics of British capitalism—as opposed to what they saw as endless discussions of a general model of the ‘capitalist mode of production’—Rose, Miller and the other ‘governmentality’ theorists have completed a theoretical metamorphosis so that any residues of Marxian political economy have been purged. It is not just that ‘class’ has become a taboo concept, but even terms such as ‘capitalism’ or ‘capitalist’ rarely, if ever, appear in their writings for possible fear of being contaminated by an ‘obsolete’ political vocabulary. Since the 1960s, it has become clear that Foucault’s valuable analyses of the genealogy of particular socio-cultural institutions can be used for radical political analysis or for liberal or conservative purposes. However, his writings

63 See my non-Foucauldian and anti-Althusserian analysis of ideal types of ‘the state’, ‘the economy’ and ‘civil society’ in Beyond the State?, London 1983. Mark Neocleous in Administering Civil Society, London 1996, argues against Foucault, Donzelot and Rose for dispensing with the distinction between state and civil society, devaluing the central role of the state and reducing everything to the catch-all concept of ‘the social’. ‘Foucault’s concept’s “war”, “resistance”, “power” and “the social” are weaker than Marx’s conceptualization of struggle for domination between exploiting and exploited classes as the essence of civil society, in which the state is inherently involved. Foucault’s rejection of the state-civil society distinction and expansion of war encourages us to conflate all struggles into one universal struggle, rename it social warfare, and leave it at that. This not only fails to explain why the social order appears to be one of perpetual war and what role, if any, the state has within this…” (p. 86) While agreeing with Neocleous’s critique of the Foucauldians, it is still necessary to reject the vague use of clear spheres of civil society and the state without succumbing either to the Foucauldian reduction of everything to the social or the Althusserian reduction of everything to ideological and repressive state apparatuses.

64 See P. Piccone, ‘Scapegoating Capitalism’, Telos, no. 97, Fall 1993, pp. 85–96.

65 See, for instance, A. Cutler, B. Hindess, P. Hirst, A. Hussain, Marx’s Capital and Capitalism Today, vol. 1, London 1977, and the journals Ideology and Consciousness and Politics and Power whose editorial board included Hindess, Hirst, Rose and others influenced by French theorists such as Foucault.

66 See Cutler et al., Marx’s Capital and Capitalism Today, vol. 11, London 1978. Hirst and Thompson have certainly maintained this interest in political economy up until the present.
are useless when it comes to explaining the macro-economic processes of specific national and supranational forms of capitalist accumulation. Not surprisingly, the ‘Foucault effect’ results in the Anglo-Foucauldians focusing almost completely on the technologies of ‘governmentality’ while ignoring critical issues such as the distribution of wealth under regimes from Thatcher to Blair. Apart from specifying the new rules for the ‘conduct of conduct’, they do not analyze the impact of these advanced liberal forms on the relationship between rates of profitability of various sectors of capitalist industry and the active and inventive forms of government regulation. But then, how could Rose and Miller analyze the redistribution of wealth away from people on low incomes and the public sector when they reject the oppositional concepts of ‘public and private’ or ‘government and market’ as obsolete? What appears in their writing as an analysis of welfare and other social policies is almost invariably an examination of techniques of rule rather than the distributional consequences affecting different classes in society. But then focusing on ‘class’ would risk lapsing into Marxian ‘totalizing’ theory.

Moreover, in their eagerness to analyze all the ways in which individuals voluntarily seek personal objectives that enhance the new forms of advanced liberalism, the ‘governmentality’ theorists are notoriously silent about the endless forms of coercion deployed by repressive state apparatuses. Of course, full scale paramilitary attacks on striking miners, or endless episodes of police brutality and the arrest of workers, Greens and students at picket lines in Britain, Australia and North America could only be radical ‘illusions’ as the categories of ‘coercion and consent’, not to mention ‘repression’ or ‘domination’ are supposed to be largely redundant. Similarly, their analyses of advanced liberalism consistently ignore the centralized security and defence apparatuses which, like large military-industrial complexes, are somehow little engaged with the new forms of ‘government through community’.

It is easy to agree with the description of many of the new forms of ‘government through community’ without throwing out the mutant baby of capital accumulation with the dirty bath-water of some of the old forms of regulation. Just because government has been corporatized and market models applied to a whole host of welfare and public institutions, does not mean that the distinction between public and private has collapsed. On the contrary, the triumph of neoliberal agendas has everything to do with preserving private wealth at the expense of public decommmodified services, many of which have hitherto been relatively immune to commercial market criteria. Yet, if one rejects the notion of commodification—because this in turn is related to a whole set of other Marxian concepts about the circuits of capital, the relationship between wage labour and capital and so forth—it is clear that one cannot have a satisfactory theory of, say, the British or Australian state that analyses the way these state institutions have changed their contradictory roles in the reproduction or the disruption of profitable private accumulation.

Rose and the ‘governmentalists’ are very insightful in pointing out how budgetary and audit processes circumvent the application of expertise and maintain central control by shifting responsibility onto each service unit and individual professional. But what of the way central state or federal tax, audit and regulatory policies directly and indirectly boost the profit levels of capitalist firms? I am not referring here to a raft of depreciation allowances and tax rulings that have made derivatives such as junk bonds profitable. Nor am I just citing the numerous examples of corporations relying upon tax policies and concessions to artificially boost short-term dividends and profit levels in the face of inadequate market growth or the inability to raise the level of labour exploitation. Rather, I am also concerned that the ‘governmentality’ theorists eschew valuable notions such as the ‘fiscal crisis of the state’. To put it bluntly, what are the technologies of ‘governmentality’ and the ‘shaping the private self’ for? Are they merely to consolidate new forms of regulation for the sake of regulation? Or are they also vital new techniques driven by political economic imperatives necessary to resolve fiscal crises, enhance competitiveness with other national or regional capitalists and restore profitability levels in key sectors of the market? Are these changes to ‘the social’ in favour of ‘governing through community’ primarily the result of national government initiatives, or proposals first heavily lobbied for by right-wing think tanks, supranational bodies such as the International Monetary Fund, the OECD and particular national peak bodies such as confederations of business, chambers of commerce and so forth? Why are fiscal allocations to social welfare and other non-profitable public services consistently targeted so that the logic and values of market exchange prevail over non-market criteria? Moreover, how can we possibly make sense of this without prior historical notions of the development of commodity exchange production, class divisions, workers’ struggles to decouple social welfare provisions from private market criteria and other historical developments of specific state institutions and public sector services within capitalist societies?

Rose is ambiguous on these issues as he simultaneously puts forward a model of advanced liberalism but adds caveats to the effect that ‘the social’ has not disappeared and one cannot schematically ‘periodize’ the change from liberalism to advanced liberalism. In fact, the way that ‘governmentality’ is described reminds one of two earlier theoretical disputes. ‘Governing the soul’ is in certain respects a mirror image of the ‘dominant ideology’ thesis. That is, certain orthodox Marxist exponents of dominant ideologies gave the impression that workers were unthinking adherents to the ruling-class ideology, or that the dominant ideology was deeply embedded within the psyche of the subordinate class, rather than being a set of values or practices that may have never gained hold amongst significant numbers of particular populations. Similarly, while Foucauldians supposedly counter the weaknesses of the dominant ideology thesis by stressing how individuals actively participate in the construction of the new forms of regulation and self-identity, they lose sight of the widespread opposition to ‘enterprise culture’, audits, managerialism and the destruction of substantive forms of non-commodified choice. They also fail to differentiate between the surface hype of new
management practices—which many people adopt as survival strategies—and whether these individuals actively believe in these neoliberal practices and values.

The overwhelming impression created by the Foucauldians is that advanced liberalism is almost fool proof in that subjects actively self-construct the new technologies of regulation. It is the theoretical equivalent of piece-work. Although piece-work harnesses workers to a regime of self-exploitation, there are many historical examples of militant worker rebellions against this system. The Anglo-Foucauldians do not, however, show much interest in alternative forms of governance. In this sense, Rose and company come close to appearing as new structural functionalists in their preoccupation with order and regulation. But then Foucault had a one-sided concept of the past two hundred years as the history of surveillance and ‘governmentality’. Slight images of social improvement can be gleaned from the Anglo-Foucauldians, but on the whole they are happily immersed in the bleak patterns of ‘system integration’ and ‘system adaptation’—even if they do not use these Parsonian terms. Thirty years ago, Parsonian functionalists also rejected criticisms that their theory was orientated towards system equilibrium and could not adequately accommodate social conflict. The Foucauldians would similarly argue that their work is cognizant of resistance and political contests that may flow from the construction of ‘government through community’. Yet, their preoccupation with technologies of ‘governmentality’ leaves little room for emphasizing alternative political processes.

Some of the Anglo-Foucauldians also share Weber’s ambivalent attitude to bureaucracy. That is, they are simultaneously troubled by the new forms of advanced liberal regulation but are in awe of its techniques and its effective regulation of the masses. Just as the elite theorists saw elites as inevitable, so the ‘governmentality’ pessimists can only see new forms of control. Disavowing notions of ideology in favour of discourse analysis, the whole theory of ‘governmentality’ has an element within it that resembles a value-free objective science which from a detached, all-knowing distance observes the parade of social regulations unfold. Ultimately, all social change—from the Enlightenment to advanced liberalism—is virtually reduced to another form of regulation. Obsessed with deconstructing totalities, the Foucauldians are the only ones licensed to analyze totality.

The Impossibility of Self-Governing Democracies

Rose gives the vague impression that he might still hold out hope for the possibility of self-governing communities. Advanced liberalism, he says, has given rise to new ‘anti-political’ motifs which have alighted upon ‘community’. Accordingly, each of these ‘emergent political rationalities—civic republicanism, associationalism, communitarian liberalism—in its different way, seeks a way of governing which is not the politically directed, nationally territorialized, bureaucratically staffed and programatically rationalized projects of a centralized State. Rather, the new way of governing will be through instrumentalizing the self-governing properties of the subjects of government themselves in a
whole variety of locales and localities—enterprises, associations, neighbour-hoods, interest groups and, of course, communities. Rose mis-reads associationist and civic republican political theories—including the work of Paul Hirst—as anti-nationally territorialized political and socio-economic programmes. Rather, many of them invariably propose combinations of federal or central states with local associations and communities in new forms of active citizenship and anti-bureaucratic collaboration. I will return to the Foucauldian hostility to ‘overarching political programmes’ shortly. In the meantime, it is important to recognize that Barry Hindess takes Rose’s critique of the Left one stage further by arguing that even self-governing communities are impossible.

In a body of articles and books written over the past decade, Hindess has actively deconstructed many familiar left concepts of the relationship between classes, political interests and objectives. One favourite target recently has been his attempt to debunk various notions of socialist democracy. Hindess claims that there is no ‘universal paradigm in which alternative social arrangements can be unambiguously ranked as exhibiting greater or lesser degrees of democracy’ and that ‘there is nothing essentially democratic in any particular set of institutional arrangements’. Hence the idea of a self-governing socialist democratic community is an impossible dream because the desire to control the agenda clashes with the desire of autonomy present in the citizenry. At one level, Hindess’s objection to socialist democracy is a rehash of the old liberal and conservative critiques of the incompatibility of equality with freedom. At another level, Hindess is merely stating the obvious, namely, that institutional formulas drawn up on paper do not necessarily work in practice for all societies. But if he is saying that, a priori, we cannot know anything about democratic institutions, then he is in danger of abdicating all commitment to practical politics. For while there can be no guarantee that any political arrangements will work as their designers intended, we have ample historical evidence concerning the types of institutional arrangements that are guaranteed to prevent equity, participation and democratic control. Yet this is precisely what Hindess denies in his rejection of universal paradigms that rank social arrangements as exhibiting greater or lesser degrees of democracy.

69 See P. Hirst, Associative Democracy, Cambridge 1994. See also P. Hirst, ‘Democracy and Civil Society’ in P. Hirst and S. Khilnani, eds, Reinventing Democracy, Oxford 1996, where he argues that ‘If core activities of central concern to the life of the citizen like welfare, public services and economic production are not to remain dominated by top-down administration and if policy is not to become the prerogative of a managerial elite, then the whole of society and not just the state needs to be viewed politically, as a complex of institutions that require a substantial measure of public and popular control over their leading personnel and major decisions. That is, civil society must no longer be viewed as a “private” sphere, it needs to take on elements of “publicity” in the original sense of the term. We require a constitution for society as much as we do for the state’ (p. 101).
71 B. Hindess, ‘Imaginary Presuppositions’.
A positive reading of Hindess’s recent work would conclude that he has not abandoned a commitment to further democratization. All that he is doing is dispelling illusions in socialist theories that ignore the difficulty of arriving at satisfactory notions of democracy that can simultaneously please a very wide range of existing social movement constituencies and organizations that have little in common with one another. Moreover, the rise of supranational organizations, the weakening regulatory and economic powers of national governments and the cross-national forms of cultural communication all throw into doubt the meaning and viability of pervasive notions of democratic self-governing communities. Given the crucial role that organizations play in contemporary societies, it is impossible to have self-governing communities based solely upon democratic citizen participation if this notion of democracy fails to recognize that organizations cannot be reduced to the equivalence of self-determining individuals. Hence, all theories of further democratization must dispel illusions of citizen-based communities and come to terms with the complex role of organizations.

**Hard-Headed and Romantic Theory**

Hindess’s sobering and difficult questions are too important to dismiss lightly. Yet, in turn, they raise the immediate question of what likely forms of politics can arise from his hyper-pessimistic interrogation of democracy? Certainly, the concept of self-governing associative democratic communities—advocated by Hindess’s former collaborator, Paul Hirst—would fail Hindess’s test and also be classified as an impossible dream. In fact, Hindess wants a new language and theory of power. There can be no liberty without domination, he says, as heteronomy is the permanent condition of humanity. Hence, we must give up not only the utopian notion of autonomous citizens, but also the political fictions that still determine contemporary politics. In a theoretical strategy reminiscent of Althusser’s rejection of those writings of Marx that were still saturated with Feuerbachian or ‘humanist’ problematics, Hindess now criticizes all those passages in Foucault that have a close affinity to Weber and the Frankfurt School’s notions of domination and other universalist ‘political fictions’. At the same time, Hindess believes that for the foreseeable future the language of politics will continue to be dominated by conflicts between those who are unprincipled realists and those who are unrealistic utopians.

Is Hindess, like the other Anglo-Foucauldians, doomed to the irrelevance of abstract critique while the ‘realists’ in parliamentary party

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74 Ibid.
75 See B. Hindess, ‘Sources of Disillusion in Labour and Social Democratic Politics’, unpublished paper delivered at V. Gordon Childe Centenary Conference, Brisbane 1990. Childe’s famous conclusion in *How Labour Governs* (1923) that the Australian Labor Party betrayed its ideals as it degenerated from an inspired group of socialists into a vast machine for capturing power, rivalled Michels’s disillusioning analysis of social democracy. Hindess rejects both Michels’s ‘realism’ and Childe’s idealism as typical of the incorrigible features of the language of Western politics.
machines do battle with the ‘utopians’ in socialist, Green and other liberation movements? Or is the critique of self-governing communities merely an elaborate rationalization for the rejection of radical politics and an indirect endorsement of conventional Australian Labor and British Labour Party politics? Despite his disclaimers, Hindess’s work of the early 1980s was barely distinguishable from a Realpolitik analysis of why parliament was ineffective in controlling state institutions and why, in turn, the British Labour Party could not, as a number of socialist radicals believed, become a vehicle for the overthrow of capitalism. Hindess feared that unrealistic radicals would deny Labour even the chance of managing the capitalist economy, a difficult enough feat that would, Hindess argued, be an important success on its own terms, even if it was not socialism.76 Little wonder that Hindess and other Anglo-Foucauldians, despite criticisms, admired the ability of the Australian Labor Party to stay in power for thirteen years and manage the capitalist economy by promoting neoliberal policies. Apart from ‘successful management’, Hindess does not make it clear why electoral success is worth having if the labour parties in Britain or Australia are committed to socio-economic policies that are very similar to those of the conservatives.

Interestingly enough, Hirst’s model of associative democracy serves the Anglo-Foucauldians well. It is has key features such as macro-economic interventionist policies to sustain economic growth that make it close to the generic social democratic model and distant from alternative ecologically sustainable policies. Hirst’s associationist model is actually driven by a dubious concept of modernization—also particularly visible in the works of Will Hutton and other British analysts—that naively assumes that if only the UK adopted German or other non-Anglo-American capitalist economic and managerial techniques, this would solve deep-seated problems. Conversely, the same illusions are held in Germany and other European countries by advocates of Anglo-American neoliberal policies. On the other hand, Hirst’s espousal of the English pluralist tradition and associationist politics endears itself to Rose who sees in it the ‘anti-politics’ of community as against social democratic and socialist politics based on ‘overarching national political programmes’. This localism fits in well with postmodern opposition to socialist political economy based on ‘totalizing’ and universalise paradigms. But despite his rejection of radical politics and class analysis, Hirst is still too committed to alternative political economic projects for Minson’s liking. That is why Minson criticizes Hirst’s model as being politically romantic.77 Like Hunter, Minson rejects socialist and liberal pedagogies that strive for the romantic goal of the all-round, self-determining personality. Following Schmitt, Minson rejects those socialists who ignore the contingent nature of government specialization, procedures and decision-making. The romantics are constantly measuring each historical moment, each imperfect empirical process against a universal, transcending ethics or end goal.78

77 J. Minson, Questions of conduct, ch. 9.
78 Ibid., ch. 1. This is not the place to discuss the significant difference between the original targets in Schmitt’s critique of political romanticism and Minson’s use of Schmitt against the generation of 1968. The revival of Schmitt’s work is visible in the work of former Marxists in Telos—Chantal Mouffe, Paul Hirst and others—from Derrida’s discussion of friendship to redefinitions of liberalism and debates over federalism and the EU. Ellen
While Minson’s critique is relevant to all those radicals who have half-baked, simplistic yearnings for a transparent society that is free of complexity, the negative implications of his anti-political romanticism become apparent when he moves from ethical philosophy to practical politics. In a revealing review of a personal account of wheeling and dealing by former king-maker and right-wing machine boss in the Australian Labor Party, Graham Richardson, Minson gushes with admiration for an apparatchik who confessed to lying and using every available tactic to achieve his political goals.\(^{79}\) In rejecting ‘the unworldly, holier-than-thou posture from which so much public suspicion of politics and politicians emanates’, Minson draws on Cicero and also Castiglione’s Renaissance *Book of the Courtier* to whitewash Richardson’s conduct. According to Minson, ‘it is incumbent upon anyone with a serious involvement in politics to set about making themselves equal to the demands of the actual political institutions, warts and all, which create this modus vivendi. And this requires learning to appreciate the ethical abilities that go with the territory. The problem is that we tend not to see institutionally specific forms of character as moral...’ Rather, there is ‘the propensity to identify the ethical with the “values” that express one’s whole personality or obligation to society in general.’\(^{80}\) So this is what democracy and the ‘ethics of serious politics’ amounts to. Given this anti-universalist definition of ethics, Minson would have no ethical critique to make of a successful Nazi politician so long as that Nazi was ‘equal to the demands of the actual political institutions’. And given Minson’s celebration of the ‘ethical abilities that go with the territory’, is the problem with liars and ruthless administrators—such as Richard Nixon—not that they violate constitutional principles and public trust, but whether or not they achieve their objectives without getting caught? How naive of us to believe that politicians should have an obligation to society in general!

**The Foucauldian Defence of the Status Quo**

There is a high price to be paid for giving up what Minson, Hindess and other Anglo-Foucauldians call political romanticism. Surrendering simplistic notions of politics is one thing. Giving up goals of self-determination or self-government in return for a vague, undefined politics is another. The absence of universal values leaves the political objectives of the Anglo-Foucauldians determined largely by immediate values and conventional notions of politics and organization. Max Weber dismissed the possibility of countering bureaucratization by democratic movements from below. Hindess, Minson and Hunter also undermine most conceptions of grass-roots democracy within a larger framework because

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\(^{80}\) Ibid., p. 20.
they constantly debunk self-governing communities and radical ‘idealism’ in the name of anti-political romanticism. Thus the ‘technologies of government’ imagined by the Anglo-Foucauldians implicitly remain very close to those forms of contemporary organizational and administrative structures which currently exist. The practical end result is a direct or indirect endorsement of ‘realist’ right-wing Labor government policies. Not surprisingly, it is difficult to find in their work a single alternative political movement to the left of the Australian or British Labour parties that they actually support.

On the other hand, Rose and Burchell—in a value-free manner that dares not drop the inverted commas surrounding moral ‘goods’ and ‘bads’—argue that not all neoliberal innovations in government are ‘bad’. If this is the case, the onus is on the Anglo-Foucauldians to spell out in more detail what new forms of ‘governmentality’ they actually welcome and why these technologies of rule ‘might be exploited if we are to maximize the capacity of individuals and collectivities to shape the knowledges, contest the authorities and configure the practices that will govern them in the name of their freedoms and commitments.’ But then why would they favour ‘maximizing the capacities of individuals and collectivities’ if they explicitly reject the prior notions of self-determination, freedom from domination and other universalize values that individuals strive for and which are supposedly based on illusory forms of political romanticism?

If Hindess is correct in arguing that the language of Western politics is doomed to be governed by ‘unprincipled realism’ and ‘unrealistic utopianism’, there is very little scope for his abstract criticism to become relevant to practical political movements. Given that most citizens—whether radical or conservative—are not prepared to surrender notions of self-governing communities, we can be certain that major political objectives will continue to be couched in these terms.

**Multiculturalism and the Universal**

Equally important, it is issues such as multiculturalism that highlight the limits of the anti-universalise theories espoused by both *Telos* and the Anglo-Foucauldians. We have already seen how *Telos* theorists reject multiculturalism and opt for assimilationism and various defences of traditional ‘organic communities’. By contrast, Hindess and the ‘governmentality’ theorists support multiculturalism and diversity. But their rejection of universal ethics and overarching national political programmes renders their defence of multiculturalism ineffective. For it is in countries such as Australia that ethnic, feminist, gay and other forms of communal diversity—something Hindess regards as impossible to subject to universal paradigms—have actually been most successfully defended by appeals to generalizable interests. It is only the existence of larger, transcendent notions of equality through diversity, mutual

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81 See Burchell, ‘Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self’, p. 280 and also Rose, ‘The Death of the Social?’ p. 353, where he says that role of analysis ‘should not be to praise or to blame but to diagnose’.

82 Rose, ‘The Death of the Social?’
respect and tolerance, that makes possible the advance of democratic citizenship. The hatred and division fomented by all sorts of racists and nationalist mono-culturists has been countered via overarching national political strategies—for instance, Australian government policies of multiculturalism—rather than left solely to local communities. National and local are crucial in developing universal values that in turn depend on more internationalist notions of universal ethics. This is what is meant by internationalism beginning at home.

If Telos retreats to ‘organic community’, the Anglo-Foucauldians show that even ‘community’ can be ‘governmentalized’ after the death of ‘the social’. Telos, despite its shift to the Right, still exhibits a healthy quasi-anarchist distrust of many forms of government power. The ‘governmentalists’ by contrast, are useful in alerting us to the way radical values can be harnessed to new forms of regulation. In challenging the Left to put forward alternative technologies of rule or a new ‘logic of the Left’, they force political movements to go beyond conventional forms of power and the slogans attached to alternative institutional arrangements. Both Telos and the Anglo-Foucauldians are important in that they remind us how difficult it is to change capitalist societies. The ‘populist’ strategy advocated by Telos can only succeed by bolstering the festering resentment and deep-seated prejudices of those hurt and rendered powerless by corporate capitalist policies and supranational structures such as the EU. The ‘governmentality’ theorists pessimistically highlight the profound social changes that have made radical national politics very difficult to sustain regardless of their own opposition to such ‘overarching’ politics.

What is so unsatisfactory about the theorists of advanced liberalism is that like Telos, they have no political or economic theory which gives substance to their analysis of the technologies of rule. So obsessed are they in purging any vestiges of Marxist political economy, that they consistently de-emphasize the economically driven connection between new liberal technologies of rule and the demand by the private corporate sector to have governments apply neo-classical economic policies. Rose and Miller retreat to a psychologistic ‘passional economy’ or analysis of the government of consuming passions. In over-emphasizing the degree to which neoliberal political economies are regimes based upon self-regulating individuals, the Foucauldians fail to analyze why advanced liberalism is an unsustainable mode of regulation which is dependent upon the continued reproduction and viability of particular forms of capital accumulation. That is, the forms of regulation associated with ‘government through community’ are no more durable than earlier forms of liberal

83 See P. Miller and N. Rose, ‘Mobilizing the Consumer: Assembling the Subject of Consumption’, *Theory, Culture and Society*, August 1997, pp. 3–35. The authors are successful in showing the weaknesses of those theories that are based upon the manipulation of consumers and the creation of ‘false needs’. But in rejecting radical theories of hegemony and domination, Miller and Rose’s ‘political economy of subjectification’ is notable for its complete lack of critique of the larger environmental and production role of advertising in capitalist societies. The fact that individuals help companies construct existing forms of consumption as ‘personally pleasurable and socially acceptable’, does not necessitate an implicit endorsement of the power relations of contemporary capitalist institutions under the guise of studying the human technologies which make the ‘soul knowable and calculable’. 
rule which produced ‘the state of welfare’ as a result of the Depression of the 1930s. Alas, the Anglo-Foucauldians are largely uninterested in the political and economic dynamics of contemporary capitalist accumulation that can sustain profit and growth levels necessary for the complementary forms of cultural consumption and advanced liberal rule. What level of associated environmental destruction and economic crisis could possibly lead to new forms of local, national or supranational politics and administration? An earlier generation of critical theorists did not abandon radical political economy, even though they used negative concepts to expose capitalist culture and power relations. Unfortunately, the ‘governmentality’ theorists have largely detached theoretical critique from eco-socialist projects of cultural and socio-political transformation and ecological sustainability.

Both Telos and the Anglo-Foucauldians reflect the wider political impasse characterizing contemporary capitalist societies. The attraction of particularise right-wing populist movements in Europe, North America and Australia cannot be explained in isolation from the failure of Labour, Social Democratic, Eurocommunist, Green and centre-Left parties to counter the effect of neoliberal policies during the past two decades. In this new conjuncture, many of the radical intellectual generation of ’68 have replaced their former opposition to Lyndon Johnson’s ‘Great Society’ and the Keynesian welfare state with a retreat to the far more inequitable neoliberal policies of Blair, Clinton and others. If Telos’ populism represents the political cul-de-sac of a perverted critical theory, then the former Marxists, now Anglo-Foucauldians are in danger of appearing as the indirect academic apologists for neoliberalism—even as they expose its technologies of rule. For the Realpolitik concepts of democracy and citizenship that emerge in these post-Marxian schools are very much direct rejections of the larger egalitarian programmatic forms of redistribution that still require active political struggles at the local, national and supranational level. These programmes may well be better run in local democratic associations and communities in conjunction with federal and supra-national processes. But the difficult task of political economic transformation and the corresponding minimization or abolition of ecologically destructive production and consumption is most unlikely to succeed if confined either to the parochialism of ‘organic communities’ or the detached, diagnostic descriptions of ‘advanced liberal’ forms of rule.
Poststructuralist Marxism, or post-Marxism, is a theoretical viewpoint that elaborates and revises the work of Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault. Unlike traditional Marxism, which emphasizes the priority of class struggle and the common humanity of oppressed groups, post-Marxism reveals the sexual, racial, class, and ethnic divisions of modern Western society. Confronting neoliberal regimes: The post-Marxist embrace of populism and realpolitik. Article. Full-text available. And so this dissertation theorizes neoliberal and militarized post-politics and historical social regimes and their affective structures. It argues that ours is a post-political society in which lives inhabit a time all of their own, 3. It is precisely for this reason that confronting post-politics must be a political question. For politics proper is always an intervention into a particular situation, against specific agents. If conflict, antagonism and the event are invisible in our contemporary post-political condition, the challenge of politics today is to make them appear. The task of politics is, in other words, to shift conflict and antagonism to their proper place. But in what form? Neoliberalism defined, and compared to classic political liberalism and market-liberalism. The definition of neoliberalism presented here is more abstract than usual - but it also suggests that neoliberalism has been underestimated. A widely quoted example of those 'usual definitions' is What is "Neo-Liberalism"? by Elizabeth Martinez and Arnoldo García: Neo-liberalism is a set of economic policies that have become widespread during the last 25 years or so.