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in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

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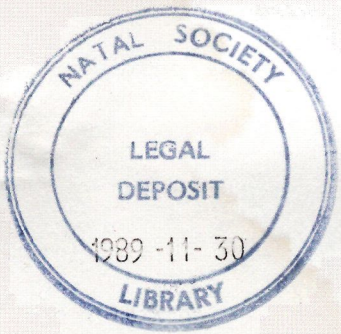

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EDITORIAL

We should like to thank our contributors for their varied and stimulating responses to our special topic; the role of the Humanities in South Africa. Most of the articles in this issue were written especially for *Theoria*, and have, without pre-arrangement, distributed themselves over a variety of disciplines. We include two others that belong to different but related debates: Ronald Nicolson's is, in part, a reply to James Moulder's 'Africanising our Universities', and was, like the latter's, delivered as a University Lecture on the Pietermaritzburg campus; and Eric Louw's 'Building a South African Democracy' grew out of a response to Mervyn Frost's 'Opposing Apartheid'. Both these articles serve appropriately to place the particular topic of this issue within the context of the larger debates about the future of the universities in South Africa, and about the kind of South Africa in which we might hope to function.

Among the contributors who directly address the role of the Humanities or the role of a particular discipline within the Humanities, there is general agreement that our most important task at the present time is the fostering of critical thought, both in our students and in relation to our organization and methodology. This is not, of course, a new or revolutionary idea; but that it needs constantly to be re-affirmed is evident from some of the opinions that have emerged in the debate about the universities. That it is revolutionary in a special sense will, we think, be seen ten to fifteen years from now, when, if we do our work well, our present students will have challenged and perhaps changed some of the concepts and practices that contribute to the dull conformity of our divided and divisive education.

The presence on our campuses of so many Black students, underprepared only in different ways from our underprepared White students, is mistakenly seen as a problem: the real problem has been with us for forty years, and longer. What we have now is an opportunity, the greatest tertiary education has ever had in this country, of intervening in the processes that will help to shape the future.

THE EDITORS

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LIGHTS OUT FOR THE HUMANITIES? — ALLAN BLOOM AND THE UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA*

by R.B. NICHOLSON

Many older graduates of this somewhat inbred campus — once bitten with the Maritzburg bug some of us seem unable ever to leave — will remember a previous head of my own department, Professor Alfred Rooks. In his classes students were introduced not only to some of the wisdom of the East, but to a wide array of European culture. From him I learned to know a little about the Greek Sophists, about Plato and Aristotle. I brushed shoulders with Augustine, Abelard and Aquinas. I learned to nod distantly at Hegel and Feuerbach, and to genuflect before Heidegger, Sartre and Camus. We touched on Tolstoy and Dostoevski; we became dutifully acquainted with the three B's of German theology, Barth, Brunner and Bonhoeffer. We even grappled with Heisenberg and the indeterminacy principle in modern microphysics.

Of course the lectures were not precisely what theologians would regard as proper theology; but his lecture rooms were always full. Many of his students still remember and profit from them. With their demise something has gone out of our university life. He offered his students, if not theology in any strict sense, then in essence what a liberal education is all about. In many ways, both in its strengths and weaknesses, Rooks's contribution to the university illustrates exactly what Bloom is talking about in his recent widely selling book.[1]

For South African students like us Rooks was a gateway to culture. Allan Bloom describes American liberal universities in what he regards as their heyday of the 1950s in the same way. American students came with none of the sophistication and jadedness of their European counterparts, but with a clean educational slate, a *tabula rasa*, enthusiastic to have their minds filled from the rich wellsprings of Europe. And the American universities, particularly Chicago, were well able to fill that need, staffed as they were with some of the best minds of Europe, particularly Germany, refugees from the Nazi destruction of their own universities. Students came to university not to prepare for a career — in the prosperous America of the 1950s that was not a priority — but to search for truth and value and beauty. That's what universities were for. I think that may have been why Rooks's classes were so popular here; they met the students' need for a window on to the world outside of their own experience.

*This paper was presented as a College Lecture on 1 March 1989.

Inevitably in such wide ranging lectures there were often overgeneralizations, even prejudices. Bloom would not object to prejudice.

> When I was a young teacher at Cornell, I once had a debate about education with a professor of psychology. He said it was his function to get rid of prejudices in his students. I found myself responding that I personally tried to teach my students prejudices, since nowadays — with the general success of his method — they had learned to doubt beliefs even before they believed in anything.[2]

Bloom has his own prejudices, particularly about what he sees as the lowering of standards at Cornell in their attempts —misguided, as he sees them — to accommodate and placate black power activists in the 1960s. He deplores what he regards as the lowering of standards, the inflation of grades/marks, the offering of pseudo-courses in such things as black literary studies, or black history, or feminist women's studies. He will therefore lose a great deal of sympathy in this university, I have no doubt. I cannot judge whether Bloom is fair in these criticisms of what happened at Cornell, and do not think they necessarily reflect upon our own endeavours here to make adjustments in the light of the desired increased enrolment of black students. I recall, however, a student in the special part-time B.A. course, which we are still running for black teachers, asking for help in understanding his lectures but pleading with us not to lower our standards in any way, for the standard and status of the degree was pecisely why he had chosen to study here and not continue with Ngoya. I do not defend Bloom's crotchetiness, even arrogance, on these issues; but in his defence there is no doubt that he was deeply scarred by what happened at Cornell in the 1960s student uprising. He offers some scathing and possibly libellous accounts of the activities of the president and other staff members at Cornell at that time.

I must attempt a summary of his basic thesis, with great trepidation since his book is already a summary of political philosophy from Socrates to Heidegger, and to summarize a summary is a rash attempt indeed. But on it hinges his analysis of what he regards as the grave crisis of American universities since the 1960s, so I plunge in boldly where wiser angels would fear to tread.

A subtitle to his book reads:

> How higher education has failed democracy and impoverished the souls of today's students.

Socrates, Bloom says, and Plato following him, believed that a philosopher would always be at odds with the *demos*, the common

people, because only a few are wise. It is the philosopher's task to search for and expound the truth, to expose false reasoning, to question common assumptions and majority opinions. Ideally, perhaps, a city or state should be ruled by a philospher-king: but Plato knew that in reality this ideal state would never exist. A philospher will therefore always be unpopular with the masses — an assumption borne out by Socrates's own end, forced by the city to take hemlock. Through the following centuries philosphers, still at odds with the *demos*, often tended to look for support towards the aristocracy, for these men, although not wise themselves, had at least the leisure and the education to appreciate the philosophical endeavour — and to pay for it! Nevertheless philosophers never melded or identified with the aristocracy; they walked their path alone, a race apart.

But with the Enlightenment, the flowering of reason in the 18th century, philosophers came to a new endeavour. They turned from looking at the aristocracy for support, and looked to the *demos* instead. It is always difficult to define exactly what the *Aufklaring*, the Enlightenment, is, but for Bloom it means the work of Locke, Montesquieu, De Tocqueville, Bentham, Mill, and surely, although he doesn't mention him, Tom Paine. In the Enlightenment philosophers hoped to bring the *demos* to reason. All people, or at least all educated and voting people, could be brought to see the value of reason, and be taught to exercise reason. In reason lay the ground for success of the modern state. For was it not reason that had enabled the birth of modern science with Newton? Was it not reason that would enable the people to grasp what is true for themselves and thus end their dependence upon bishops and priests and kings and princes to define what is right? Reason makes democracy possible. True, the common people will not equal the philosophers in reason — not even Locke thought that. Nor will the common people choose the path of reason from any high ground of noble moral commitment. They are not Socrates. Rather, their own enlightened self-interest will lead them to follow and support reason. Reason is the key to a successful and happy human lot.

The American founding fathers were children of the Enlightenment. Bloom is a patriot who believes that American democracy, at least in the intention of the founding fathers, is soundly based upon reason and Enlightenment values. The founding fathers were Lockean to a man. The American constitution is based upon truths which they held to be self-evident to all. Each individual must be free, protected by the recognition of self-evident human rights, to make his or her own decisions based upon rational observation. In order to create a stable society, however, each free individual must enter into a contract to

recognize the equal rights of others. This must imply a voluntary renunciation of some individual freedom and the agreement to abide by majority decisions.

Herein lies the fly in the ointment. A democracy has its drawbacks, Bloom concedes. In the very agreement to abide by majority decisions lies the danger that the *demos* is not as reasonable as the philosopher. Most individuals do not have the time or the ability to think deeply and clearly about things. Nor are people motivated by cool reason alone. In the human psyche there is passion, inchoate feeling, instinct. The common people will therefore often fall short of what is reasonable and right, even though they may have come to the point of valuing reason.

The university in a democracy has therefore a very particular role to play. In a society based on reason, the university is the temple, the sacred repository and guardian, of reason. A university, Bloom says, should not minister to society or have to beg for its existence. Rather, the reverse is true. In its own interests, a democratic society or *polis* should foster and minister to the university.

In part this is because democracy needs protection from itself. There is always a tendency in every type of society for education to be subverted to serve what society perceives as its own immediate ends. In a tyrannical regime, the tyrant will wish education to produce obedient and subservient subjects. In a technocracy, the university will be required to produce scientists and engineers. In a capitalist society, universities will be encouraged to produce people who can most effectively supply and manipulate the market — hence the popularity in our own universities of B.Comms and M.B.A.s. Dr Verwoerd, the late and unlamented architect of apartheid, is notorious for his stated intention concerning Bantu Education and the establishment of the ethnic universities. It is to produce people who will be fitted for, and satisfied with, the role which the state intends that they shall play and discourage them from ambitions which can never be realized.

Although in other kinds of society the university may play a different role, in a democracy, for the good of the *polis*, a particular role is called for. In a democracy there will be a dangerous tendency to use education in order to encourage people to go along with the common mind, to smooth over any sharp disputes which may disturb the even tenor of the life of the *polis*, to reduce differences of opinion to being mere preferences rather than matters of deep principle. If the university should succumb to this pressure, however, the democracy itself will ultimately suffer, for it will then be guided not by the best reason but by the lowest common denominator. The demand that a university should seek to be relevant to what the democracy deems as important, should

thus be treated with great suspicion.[3] If Bloom is right about this, then the Mission Statement of our own university would need to be carefully examined to make sure that we are not falling into this trap.

A democractic nation needs a university in which unpopular minority opinions may be freely voiced, to be judged by reason alone. The university must

> come to the aid of unprotected and timid reason,

must be a place where

> the moral and physical superiority of the dominant view will not prevent philosophic doubt.[4]

It will also be resistant to the lowering of standards.

> In a democracy [the university] risks less by opposing the emergent, the changing and the ephemeral than by embracing them, because society is already open to them, without monitoring what it accepts or sufficiently respecting the old. The university risks less by having intransigently high standards than by being too exclusive, because society tends to blur standards in the name of equality.[5]

The principle of academic freedom has been debased, Bloom says, to mean little more than job security for those in positions of tenure in the American academic system; but the original principle is the essence of what a university is for. It exists for the sake of reason, and for the resultant good of the *polis*. This is the role which Bloom thinks American liberal universities at their best fulfilled as well as, or better than, any other Universities. But, alas, no longer!

There are two reasons for this. The very belief in individual freedom has led to a widespread American attitude that any view is as good as another. The universities, or certainly the schools, have in fact succumbed to the democratic intention of eliminating too-sharp differences.

To some extent this is a problem in my own discipline, where the various religious views in the world are put foward without favour or preference, leaving students to assume that any religion is as good as any other — in which case, of course, why bother with any; religion is reduced to quaint anthropological customs. There are those in Religious Studies, myself among them, who think that the discipline should therefore no longer be purely descriptive but also press on the questions of evaluation.

Bloom describes most modern American students as having no heroes or role models, except perhaps Mick Jagger or Michael

Jackson (this list is of course already outdated); no passion to search for what is true, since all truth is relative. They have a corresponding horror of being asked to define anything as being actually evil. He refers to the *frisson* of horror which rippled through liberal America when President Reagan described the Soviet Union as the "evil empire". Bloom remarks, not on the accuracy or fairness of President Reagan's description, but on the fact that many Americans felt uncomfortable with that kind of judgement about anyone or anything. Nobody is evil — just different! This relativization and moral indifference is the result of democracy without a philosophy to undergird it.

A sound democracy depends upon philosophy — but philosophy has also led Europe since the Enlightenment in a direction which is basically hostile to democracy and rationality. Bloom picks out particularly Rousseau, Nietzsche and Heidegger as examples of philosophers who object to the primacy of reason. Reason, says Nietzsche, destroys the *polis* because it diminishes passion and commitment. Reason is the arena of the bourgeois, the complacent and self-satisfied. Nature, intuition, the deep passions of the blood, are what count. The brave person is the one who takes up a cause on the basis of his or her autonomous choice, and stands boldly for it. Thus we have Sartre and his belief that the authentic person is the one who makes his or her own moral rules.

I cannot hope here to summarize adequately Bloom's development of this theme. He perhaps does not draw as sharp a distinction between passion and reason as I have suggested, although I think there is some ambivalence about that. Certainly he is not blind to Rousseau's valid complaints against pure rationality, and he concedes that Rousseau, Nietzsche and Heidegger are very great philosophers who deserve to be taken seriously. I must mention his grave reservations about where these philosphies take us, however, since it is so relevant to what he thinks happened in American universities in the 1960s.

The problem comes, he says, when reason having been abandoned to passion and intuition, and shallow democracy having reduced all claims to a common level of respectability, a cause arises appealing to passion and calling for commitment. A university which has abandoned reason has nothing to contribute. Hitler did not destroy the German universities; in large measure they destroyed themselves. They ceased, after Nietzsche, to give any important role to reason. German universities were reformed to make them play a role in the creation of a German culture. When Hitler appeared on the scene, he seemed at first the embodiment of intuitive German pride of race and of the existentially authentic man, having the courage to take up his own self-chosen stance. Universities had lost the gift of reason to

oppose him. They had no contribution to make to the *polis* save that of obediently supporting the direction that the *demos* under the influence of the archdemagogue had chosen. Thus in his famous *Rektoratsrede*, his address on becoming Rector of the University of Freiburg, Heidegger, the virtual founder of modern existentialism, urged commitment to National Socialism. In effect Heidegger

> encouraged the decision to devote wholeheartedly the life of the mind to an emerging revelation of being, incarnated in a mass movement.[6]
>
> The time for decision is past', Heidegger said. 'The decision has already been made by the youngest part of the German nation.[7]

None of the European intellectuals who came to America in the 1940s and 1950s were Nazis. But those same intellectuals who made possible the flowering of liberal American universities in the 1950s, brought the death seeds of the university with them. For they came with all the European post-Enlightenment scepticism about reason. And many American students, unsophisticated, unskilled in the ancient philosophies, took over their ideas uncritically in a simplistic fashion. What happened to universities in Germany in the 1930s would happen again in America.

Initially the danger seemed slight. America, after all, was wealthy, its middle class citizens relatively content, even complacent in the years of post-war prosperity. Bloom comments ironically on the astonishing Americanization and domestication of pre-war German cynicism and despair in the picture of the smiling face of Louis Armstrong as he belts out Mack the Knife, in translation from the bitter opera Die Drei Groschenoper of Brecht and Kurt Weill. The cutting edge was blunted, the despair tamed, the pathos reduced to sentimentality. The power and the danger of the European New Left seemed innocuous enough.

Middle class complacency was soon to be dented, however. With the unpopular draft for the Vietnam War to heighten emotions, student anger was unleashed against American universities for seeming to collaborate with the ugliest side of capitalism. American universities were caught unprepared once the New Left made its challenge with the Students for Democratic Society, Mark Rudd and other confrontational student leaders and behind them the *eminence grise* of Herbert Marcuse and the Frankfurt School. These students knew what they wanted, which was the abdication of liberalism and bourgeois morality. They were determined to create a new society, anti-capitalist, egalitarian of a sort (because the intellectual leadership hardly saw itself as the mere equals of the mass), intent on destroying racism and war but also the traditional model of the university. They were contemptuous of all

those outside of the cause. They were quite prepared to use violence and force to ensure their victory. They were not interested in compromise, wanting only confrontation.[8]

At that point, says Bloom, having no vision or philosophy of their own, no conviction about truth, the presidents, deans and professors of American academia collapsed weakly before the onslaught. Those who stood against the tide, who were not convinced that Mao or Che or Fidel were the saviours of the world, were ostracized and abandoned to their fate. No protection was given to minority opinions. The universities responded to pressure by dropping standards, excising difficult but important old books from the syllabi, evening out grades or even abandoning grades altogether, and introducing trivial courses which were demanded by the radical movement but (in Bloom's view) had little academic merit.

And now, he says, it is almost too late to repair the damage. There is little soil left in which to plant real education — for reason and respect for past wisdom can only be inculcated where there is some community commitment to it. The natural sciences do not really care, because they were largely left untouched by the radical demands for easier and so-called relevant courses, devaluing of grades, or affirmative action hiring and firing: natural sciences are perceived as being too important to mess around with. The social sciences have ceased to try to understand the human condition, having decided that their work is best done by assuming that human behaviour is deterministic and in principle predictable. The applied disciplines flourish, but are peripheral to the real purpose of a university. To the humanities is left the task of guarding and handing on the treasures of the past, whether of philosophy or literature or even the older science of Newton or Darwin. The humanities alone attempt to understand the human condition, to search for ultimate truth. The humanities alone can rescue the *polis* from the dangers of democracy.

Yet the humanities bore the brunt of the changes and capitulation in university priorities after the 1960s uprisings. To the humanities the university has its lowest commitment; and within the humanities there is little confidence or conviction or awareness of their role. They are content to provide a *smorgasbord* of classes, often of dubious value, competing with each other for student popularity, afraid to offend by demanding too much, providing no guidance to students about how to construct the best course to become an educated person able to help fulfil the role, so long forgotten, of a liberal university in a democracy. There is no distinction between what is important and what is trivial and trendy. Increasingly, students bypass the humanities, unwilling to spend time on what seem like fripperies, anxious to get on to the serious business of training for a career.

You may think his scenario too gloomy. You may think that South African universities are different — and indeed to some degree they are, and in many ways provide a superior education to many American universities. But is the writing on the wall?

I am sure he is right about the role of a university in a democracy. A university may provide technology, to help with local needs. It may turn out professionals to fill the gaps in manpower; lawyers and engineers and psychologists and doctors and accountants. These are valuable services, but they are all ancillary to the role of the university. To be sure, universities cannot afford to dispense with the applied disciplines for they bring in the students and the fees and the outside funding. But all of these things could in theory be done in other institutions, and perhaps, to be honest, done better by other institutions streamlined to do that task, if only there was not the ridiculous snobbery in our society about magic letters behind one's name.

Applied disciplines help the *polis*, there can be no doubt. But they are not able to save the *polis* from itself. They are not able to prevent the majority opinion, the common mind, the conventional, from dominating; so that, in the end, the *polis* is at the mercy of the *demos* or the demagogue. Only the university in its essential role of doubting, of welcoming minority points of view, of exploring different and possibly fruitless ways of doing things, all under the searchlight of the best reason we can bring to bear, can serve the *polis* in this way. And within the university it is the humanities and the pure sciences which best provide for this; and within these disciplines it is philosophy which ought to lie at the core.

When one of the English redbrick universities under siege from Mrs Thatcher's economy dispensed with the chair in philosophy early in 1988, the *Guardian* carried a splendid editorial suggesting that a university without a philosophy department had ceased to be a university. I would extend that and say that a university without a thriving humanities section has similarly ceased to be a university at all and has become another kind of institution, put there to be the servant of the state.

Are there no danger signs for us? Can we honestly say that the humanities are well and thriving at this university? That they are clear about their role and about what is of core importance in the humanities? And are there no threats to those pursuing minority opinions here? No hints that what is perceived to be the will of the majority — or, in more Marcusian terms, the will of a conscientized elite on behalf of the majority[9] — should rule exclusively? Is there no hint that our university, short on confidence about its own stance, may sometimes surrender rather eagerly to forceful opinions from either the Minister or from our own New Left? We have no shortage of those who believe that commitment matters more than rational justification for the cause

which they espouse. Is it possible that sometimes those who eagerly embrace a so-called third-world perspective have in fact been exploited, sold a very European philosophy indeed, but not provided with the academic background to question or evaluate the stance they are being encouraged to adopt? Is the university really clear that it provides a haven for those who would question perceptions and solutions in the name of reason?

Of course we do not live in a democracy, and perhaps that changes the picture. There are serious grounds for saying that the struggle here is too urgent to allow the space and perspective for cool thought. Yet if we ever hope to have a democracy here, then the universities need to be ready to meet the role which a university should play in such a state. This is of crucial importance in Pietermaritzburg at present, where the violence within the townships is caused in part by conflicting ideological commitments. If we merely turn out those ready to fill the manpower gaps in the technical and professional fields, people who will obediently go along with the common mind — be that a Nationalist mind or an African Nationalist mind; if we do not help students to understand and evaluate the philosophy behind the causes for which they spill their blood, are we not meekly falling into the very role which Dr Verwoerd spelt out for us?

A liberal university is a very precious thing; but the lights, if not going out, are beginning to flicker.

University of Natal,
Pietermaritzburg.

NOTES

1. Bloom, Allan. *The Closing of the American Mind*. 1987. Simon and Shuster, New York.
2. Ibid. p. 42.
3. See Minogue, Kenneth R. *The Concept of a University*. 1973. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London. p. 6.
4. Bloom, op. cit. pp. 248, 249.
5. Ibid. p. 252.
6. Bloom, op. cit. p. 311.
7. Ibid. p. 315.
8. See Avorn, J.L., Crane, C., Jaffe, M., Root, O., Starr, P., Stern, M., and Stulberg, R. *University in Revolt*. 1969. Macdonald, London.
9. e.g. Marcuse, Herbert. *One Dimensional Man*. 1964. Beacon Press, Boston, pp. 20–24.

THE ROLE OF PHILOSOPHY IN SOUTH AFRICA

by SEUMAS MILLER and IAN MACDONALD

South African society as a whole is undergoing profound change and, as a consequence, the roles of particular key institutions, including universities, need to be reassessed. Our concern in this discussion paper is with the role of a specific discipline within universities in South Africa, namely philosophy, and the question we shall address is: What *ought* philosophy to be doing in South Africa?

Though the question as to what philosphers *ought* to be doing is crucially different from the question as to what they have *in fact* been doing — perhaps they have not been doing what they ought to — nevertheless they are related. This is because we can only sensibly address the question as to what we ought to do from the standpoint of some existing state of affairs — a state of affairs that would include the traditions of philosophy in which philosophers currently do their philosophizing, the sorts of training they have undergone and could hope to impart, and so on.

Let us then offer a brief, and therefore to some extent inaccurate, characterization of what philosophers have in fact been doing in South Africa. For our purposes here we introduce the following threefold distinction in respect of philosophy: (a) general; (b) applied; (c) interdisciplinary. No doubt these distinctions are somewhat artificial; but, roughly speaking, the three areas can be described as follows: general philosophy embraces the areas of traditional philosophical concerns, e.g. epistemology, logic, philosophy of mind, ethics; applied philosophy involves the application of philosophical understanding and methodology to specific concrete issues such as the role of the University in South Africa; and interdisciplinary philosophy involves the hooking up of philosophy with some other discipline — the issues here vary from the highly abstract to the fairly concrete. We would also like to distinguish between two different spheres in which philosophy might be practised. On the one hand there is the sphere of academic philosophy, involving as it does both teaching and research, and on the other that of public debate and policy-making. Finally we distinguish what we might loosely term the 'Analytic tradition' in philosophy from other traditions, particularly from the Marxist tradition and from a certain version or versions of Continental philosophy practised in philosophy departments in some Afrikaans universities.

In our characterization of what philosophers *are in fact* doing in South Africa, these three traditions — the Analytic, the Marxist, and the Continental — are pre-eminent. Of the Marxist tradition

not much need be said. It has not been strong within philosophy departments; rather it has tended to find a home in other departments such as sociology and history. The Continental tradition, however, has had a greater and more obvious impact on philosophical practice in this country. It has generally, though by no means exclusively, been associated with Afrikaans philosophy departments and tends to have been distinguished from the Analytic tradition generally practised in the English speaking universities, by its preoccupation with certain European philosophers operating in the tradition stemming from Kant and Hegel. There have been different strands of this tradition, however, some heavily influenced by the phenomenologists, others not. By contrast the Analytic tradition has tended to be preoccupied with that tradition running from the British empiricists, Locke, Hume, etc. through to Mill, Russell, and so on.

Historically it is probably the case that the influence of South Africa's Continental tradition in the areas of what we have described as interdisciplinary and applied philosophy has been greater than that of the Analytic tradition, and conceptions associated with certain Continental philosophers have made their way out of the sphere of academic philosophy more often and to greater effect than those arising out of the Analytic tradition. This is no doubt largely due to the close connections of certain strands of Continental tradition with Afrikaner Nationalism.

Having offered this highly general and crude characterization, we need immediately to make a number of important qualifications. Firstly, it is important to note that all three traditions share a common ancestry running from the Greeks through to Kant. Secondly, there have been many key figures who have straddled two or more of these traditions, e.g. Kant and Wittgenstein. Thirdly, the Analytic tradition in South Africa has important early connections with the Continental tradition, and has at times occupied itself to a very great extent with questions of applied philosophy, and in doing so it has frequently moved into the public non-academic sphere. (The philosopher Alfred Hoernle is a case in point.) Fourthly, the link between certain versions of the Continental tradition in South Africa and Afrikaner Nationalism has recently become fairly tenuous. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, philosophy in South Africa has in the last decade or so undergone a process of considerable fragmentation and crossfertilization, such that it is becoming increasingly difficult to talk in these general terms of different traditions, or of a tendency to do general rather than applied or interdisciplinary philosophy.

On the assumption that this very brief characterization of what has *in fact* taken place is not too wide of the mark, we can now

address the central question of this paper: What *ought* to be taking place in philosophy in South Africa? Now this question itself really involves two questions, one of which is prior. The prior question is: What ought philosophy to do, whether it be philosophy in South Africa, Australia, Holland or the Sultanate of Oman? Our answer to this question will make a significant difference to our answer to the question as to what philosophy ought to do in South Africa in particular.

We suggest that philosophers in South Africa and elsewhere ought to pursue general, applied and interdisciplinary philosophy. However, we stress that the order of priority has to be from general to applied and interdisciplinary, for there is no possibility of philosophers contributing usefully to practical or partly non-philosophical concerns without a thorough grounding in philosophical understanding and methodology. Such a grounding requires not only a training in philosophy; it also requires constant renewal and extension through exposure to, and reflection on, developments in general philosophy. Moreover general philosophy ought to be pursued (to some extent) for its own sake, both because it is valuable in itself and because philosophy cannot thrive if pursued solely as a means to some other end.

We also suggest that philosophy ought not to confine its operations to the academic sphere. In South Africa and elsewhere it ought to enter the sphere of public debate and policy-making. Of course when it does so it has to leave behind many of its more difficult and technical concerns, and it has to reconstitute itself into a publicly digestible form.

We maintain then, that *at the high level of generality* at which we have been talking, the role of philosophy ought to be no different in South Africa to the role it ought to have in other places — we have indicated the nature of that role. It is equally clear, however, that at a lower level of generality the role of philosophy ought to be adjusted from one social and political context to another. We now turn to consider what adjustments ought to be made in the South African context.

We contend: firstly, that in South Africa applied philosophy (as opposed to general, and indeed as opposed to interdisciplinary philosophy in so far as it is not also applied) and in particular philosophy applied to certain social, political and moral issues, ought to receive much greater emphasis than in places where practical matters are less urgent; secondly that for the same reason the role of philosophy in the sphere of public debate and policy-making (as opposed to the sphere of academic philosophy) is more important in South Africa than in many other places; thirdly, that in South Africa, and for reasons similar to the above ones, teaching ought to receive *relatively* more emphasis than research; and

fourthly that to the extent that we can talk of distinct monolithic traditions of philosophy in contemporary South Africa — and to a large extent we cannot — the Analytic tradition ought to be fostered and further developed, since it typically demands clarity, rigour, and intellectual power, all of which are essential to the development of a *critical* understanding of the world, and of ideological beliefs and practices.

Let us consider each of these four claims in more detail, beginning with the first.

Philosophy for the most part impacts itself on the social and political world in indirect ways, and does so only over a long period of time. That it does impact itself, and powerfully, is obvious from say the widespread acceptance in some contexts of Marxist or, in other contexts, of Liberal doctrines. But applied philosophy can have a relatively more direct and immediate impact. In South Africa there is a longstanding social, political and moral crisis of massive proportions. The urgency of the situation is one reason why there ought to be, and ought to have been, a relative shift among philosophers to applied philosophy. The nature of the crisis is another reason. It is a crisis calling largely for social, political, and moral change both at the level of institutions and (relatedly) at the level of thought. It is not simply — though it is in part — what we might term a technical problem, such as might be posed by an epidemic for which there is no known vaccine. In the South African situation applied philosophy can make a significant contribution by developing principles and theories which can be deployed in the analysis and critique of existing practices and institutions; such principles and theories are also crucial in the work of constructing blueprints for the future. Nor is such work unimportant. As the Marxists are, at least in some quarters, recognizing, the shape of the future society — including the outlines of its major institutions — is something that needs to be worked out now, in order that there be something relatively specific to work constructively towards (as opposed to things which require to be destroyed or abandoned). Moreover, philosophy can also contribute at the level of means as opposed to ends. For in part it is a matter of changing and developing fundamental, which is to say philosophical, beliefs and values; and it is also a matter of evaluating methods of bringing about change. Of course in performing these tasks philosophy can only work in tandem with other disciplines — especially, no doubt, the social sciences, hence the importance of applied interdisciplinary philosophy — but it is also true that workers in other fields, and indeed agents of change more generally, require philosophy. This is because the philosophical questions — What is a just society? or What is a just war? — are inescapable, and will inevitably receive answers of some kind, be they the answers of

right-wing authoritarians, of liberals or of marxists. Moreover, and this is the crucial point, some set or other of those answers will find expression in concrete social, economic and political policy — as some set has already done in the form of the apartheid society. So philosophy is inescapable. But of course what we are asking is whether or not academic philosophers working in South Africa can offer philosophical deliberations and philosophical training which ought not be bypassed. Our suggestion is that they can and ought.

Our second contention was that philosophy has a more important role to play in the sphere of public debate and policy-making in this country than in many other places. Our argument here is simply that the urgency and general social and political nature of the crisis in South Africa calls for relatively direct and immediate measures, and thus for a more outward looking posture than might be necessary in less troubled societies. It is simply not enough for philosophers to function in the narrow context of academic philosophy. They must enter the debate and seek to contribute to social and political change both within the general context of the university, and within the wider society outside the university.

Our third contention was that teaching ought to receive relatively greater emphasis than research. We have argued that at the level of general social and political theorizing philosophes can make a useful contribution in South Africa. But at the same time it is clear that at this level the impact of philosophers is not going to be great. One reason for this is that the major political players are essentially beyond the influence of academic philosophers. But another reason is that those sections of the population that are, on the face of it, well within reach are for a variety of reasons more or less immune to such theorizing. The key group here is the student body, embracing as it does mainly white but increasingly black students. The problem with such theorizing for this and other in principle reachable sections is twofold. Firstly, the white population has been socialized to the extent that the sorts of results such theorizing is likely to deliver will tend to be neither accepted nor acceptable. Secondly, the white population and more particularly large numbers of the black population, have been provided with an inadequate education particularly in terms of intellectual skills, and for this reason are often unable to understand such theorizing even if it were otherwise palatable. Moreover, the numbers of poorly equipped students entering universities in South Africa is rising sharply and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. In this context philosophical education becomes relatively more important than philosophical research; the tasks of inculcating general intellectual skills of reasoning, and of calling into question deeply ingrained prejudice,

become relatively more important. But here we must not lose sight of the fact that the stock of philosophers involved in both teaching and research is in constant need of renewal and addition, and that this is only possible if students develop a specific interest and specific skills in philosophical research.

Our fourth contention was that the Analytic tradition ought to be fostered. In saying this we are of course not claiming that the Continental and Marxist traditions ought not be fostered. Obviously there is much work in both traditions that is valuable. However, the impact of certain strands of the Continental tradition in South Africa in particular must be noted. Here it is important to distinguish quite sharply between the Continental tradition in philosophy as such, and certain versions of it to be found in South Africa. These versions have frequently been used to provide the ideological underpinnings of apartheid society. Moreover this is not a matter of an innocent South African philosophical tradition being manipulated by cynical politicians. The tradition in question was developed largely to function in that ideological capacity.

But what of the Analytic tradition? Has it not also functioned, albeit in different ways, as an ideology — perhaps as the handmaiden of liberalism? No doubt the Analytic tradition in South Africa has contributed to the cause of liberalism. But this, it seems to us, is a good thing — at least on a certain narrow rendering of what liberalism is (i.e. the commitment to an open democratic society under the rule of law). More importantly, we would want to claim that Analytic philosophy has the virtue of being at least in principle non-ideological. There is nothing in principle to prevent, for example, an avowedly Marxist work being written within the Analytic tradition. Indeed Gerald Gohen's influential book *Karl Marx's Theory of History; A Defence* is one such recent instance. As such, Analytic philosophy is not wedded *in advance* to any particular political agenda. But this point must be sharply distinguished from another with which it is often confused. While the results of serious disinterested inquiry — and this is what we claim Analytic philosophy is capable of — are not given in advance, it does not follow from this that there will be no results or that the results will not favour one set of policies over another. Obviously there would be little point to an inquiry which yielded no results or results which favoured all policies equally. So our claim is that Analytic philosophy is capable of non-ideological inquiry and that in a deeply politically divided society, such as South Africa, this is of particular importance. In a society controlled by an increasingly authoritarian government there is a real danger that academic work — especially work done in the humanities — could be undertaken in order to be deployed as *propaganda* in the service of one or the other of the competing

political causes. But in the longer term this will prove disastrous not only for the discipline itself, and for the universities, but also for the wider society. Where there are no centres of learning and research with high academic standards, with a deep commitment to truth, and in which inquiry is freely pursued, there will not be a free, just and prosperous society.

Moreover, we suggest that the Analytic tradition has additional virtues to recommend it. Firstly, the Analytic tradition is acknowledged as having high standards of clarity. Secondly, it seems to us to be methodologically very powerful, and thus in principle able to deliver the philosophical understanding much needed by South African society. Thirdly, it has a high degree of flexibility. Analytic philosophy can and ought to absorb what is valuable in the non-Analytic traditions. But we suggest that Analytic philosophy is sufficiently flexible to allow this, and that in fact this is something that is already beginning to happen in the cases of both Marxist political philosophy, and Continental general philosophy.

In conclusion, we would like to address a complaint that is sometimes made of Analytic philosophy, namely that it is in fact incapable of addressing substantive social and political issues, and hence social and political issues arising in the South African context. This complaint tends to rest on the claim that it is of the nature of the Analytic tradition to treat philosophical issues in a timeless and ahistorical way, and that they cannot be so treated. Although the matter of the historicity of philosophy is a large and complex one which we cannot take up here, we can make the following limited claims of Analytic Philosophy. Two things at least are at issue in philosophy: one, the truth of claims; and two, the evaluation of arguments purporting to show which claims are acceptable or rationally required. As far as the truth of these claims, and the validity of these arguments, is concerned, it does not matter who made the particular claim under consideration, and it is often irrelevant what the historical circumstances were at the time at which the claims were made. (What the historical circumstances were is, of course, germane to a different and prior task, namely determining what in fact is being claimed.) Moreover, there are obviously many philosophical claims about non-historically specific matters. However, within the tradition it is often believed that *all* philosophical claims are about non-historically specific matters, and that discussions about historically specific issues however valuable are simply 'not philosophy'. This belief is quite different from beliefs about the irrelevance of speakers, or (in the case of some claims) about the irrelevance of historical circumstances, to the truth of these claims. Rather the suggestion is that philosophy can make no claims about the

historically specific, and that the abstract claims it can make, make no difference to historically specific matters.

So a discussion of free speech, for example, *could* use as an illustration a fairly recent case in which Connor Cruise O'Brien was prevented from presenting a lecture at the University of Cape Town. There is a temptation among Analytic philosophers to discuss such an issue as if it would be no different if the case had occurred in Britain. But clearly, apparently 'timelessly' cogent arguments about the desirability of freedom of expression could yield conclusions which are seriously mistaken precisely because they rest upon a set of assumptions about social and political conditions, conditions which may obtain in Britain but which do not obtain in South Africa. Though there is a tendency, and perhaps a temptation, for Analytic philosophers to treat such issues out of their historical context, there is nothing intrinsic to Analytic philosophy which makes this necessary. Indeed, in recent times Analytic philosophers have begun to treat issues in applied philosophy, and have done so in a way that involves first identifying the relevant specific social and political conditions. Our contention here, then, is that philosophy, and in particular Analytic philosophy, can operate at different levels of abstraction, and that at low levels it can make relatively specific historical claims, though in doing so it must to an extent rely on other, admittedly non-philosophical claims that are historically specific.

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THE CLASSICS: A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE WORLDS

by M. LAMBERT

Of all the disciplines in the Humanities, the Classics seems to peer over the first and third world divide most awkwardly.

On the one hand, traditionalists with European concepts of the nature and meaning of a university see the study of the Greek and Latin classics as essential to the very existence of a university. Sanctioned by history and dominated by the awesome precedents of Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum, a university stands or falls with the Classics: there can be no such thing as a university, argue the traditionalists, without the vision of Sophocles, the humanity of Socrates, the rhetoric of Cicero, the sublime verse of Virgil, the tender imagery of Sappho. The Classics are an umbilical cord to our cultural origins, to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, to lonely scholars in darkened rooms thinking on thought and shaping our pasts in silence.

On the other hand, many would question the point and value of the study of the Classics in an emergent country, politically and financially unstable, crying out not for classicists but for doctors, engineers, builders and agronomists. For these the study of the Classics may seem elitist and irrelevant — the dilettantish dabblings of a neo-colonial band of reactionaries whose espousal of European culture is, in reality, a perverse cultural imperialism. To express this argument in its crudest outline: the Classics are rooted in Europe, they cannot be effectively Africanised for they are not directly relevant to the struggle and, furthermore, they have no practical use; consequently, argue the abolitionists, they have no place in a developing country which is not European. In short, the study of the Classics is a first world luxury which South Africa simply cannot afford.

This hypothetical exchange between the traditionalists and the abolitionists raises the age-old dilemma of Aquinas's *artes liberales* and *artes serviles* and their relationship with the society in which they are pursued and practised. For Aquinas the *artes liberales* are concerned with knowledge as an end in itself; the *artes serviles* with utilitarian ends attained through practical activity. The first world champions the *artes liberales* because it can afford to; the third world embraces the *artes serviles* because it needs them.

Distinguishing between the *artes liberales* and *serviles* in the latter half of the twentieth century in our fragile situation seems absurd and quaintly naive. This distinction resurrects the ghost of Plato (long since laid to rest) and implies an acceptance of rigid dualistic thinking, the dualistic thinking which, regrettably,

bedevils the South African situation: black/white, first/third world, English/Afrikaans, capitalist/communist; traditionalist/abolitionist. To view the study of the Classics as firmly ensconced within the cocoon of the *artes liberales* from where it looks down with patronising disdain on the *artes serviles* is to perpetuate the divisiveness of dualism. In our situation the *artes liberales* have to become *serviles*, the *artes serviles liberales*, and it is my contention in this paper that, of all the disciplines in the Humanities, the Classics is most ideally equipped to achieve this. In short, the traditionalists and abolitionists could meet on a bridge built by the Classics.

How is this bridge to be built? No bridge is constructed without a design; in the same way no discussion of the role of the Humanities in South African universities can escape the question of political design, of the political τέλος for which we are striving. If *most* South Africans ultimately desire a peaceful, non-racial, fully participatory society in which the concept of human rights has pride of place, then this 'end' can be effected by the very 'means' seen fit to attain it. In other words, education and, in particular, the *process* of education should contain within it the essence of the society for which most of us yearn. Ends and means merge; distinctions between *liberales* and *serviles* become purely academic. To train, therefore, should be to educate and that is why Departments of Education *and* Training are the children of apartheid, spawned in divisiveness.

How can the study of the Classics educate? The Classical civilizations are not called 'classical' without reason. They are almost perfect examples of complete civilizations: to study the Classics is to study a finished history, a literature which begins with oral epic and moves through nearly every genre in which man is currently creative, a rounded artistic, intellectual, political and religious experience, shaped in forms which we call 'classical' because they are no longer evolving. To study the classics is to look back at men and women frozen in action, caught in moments of joy and despair, standing at the edge of countless precipices, tumbling in or drawing back, bloodied or howling for it. To study the Classics is to study the origins of the first and third worlds, the origin of the first and third world divide.

It is arrant nonsense to think of the Greeks as a nation of bisexual first world sybarites who mused on 'deep thoughts' at endless symposia, whilst the wine-dark sea glinted in the Aegean sun and elegant hammerings knocked the Parthenon together. Similarly, the Romans were not mindless militants who traversed the Mediterranean world building roads and bridges with anal obsessiveness.

The history of Greece and Rome is also the history of pockets of

first world privilege flanked by third world squalor. Rome had its shanty towns and sanitary problems; Athens its disease and famine. A slave-based economy, the legal classification of people as things, the exploitation and oppression of women, civil war, imperialism and colonization, generals becoming dictators, inflation, religious persecution, racial hatred, conspiracy, revolution and counter-revolution, propagandists and informers, oligarchies masquerading as democracies, riots, murder and arson, the security police and barbarians on the borders. Greece and Rome experienced all this; to be open to these experiences is to be open to ourselves and to each other. Not to learn any answers to our problems in a crudely didactic sense but to learn what questions to ask.

South Africa needs doctors, engineers, builders and agronomists but it needs educated ones, not trained technicians — educated men and women asking informed critical questions and making informed educated decisions. To treat a patient is to treat the whole person — body, mind and soul (for we are not to think Platonically) — and to treat the whole person requires perception, sensitivity and critical acumen. An engineer has to think creatively and critically for he is both ecologist and artist; even a builder does not live by bricks alone. Doctors, engineers and builders are political beings; they will shape and share in political constitutions. They are sociological and psychological beings as well. For these very reasons their training should be educational and education involves liberation from the shackles of prejudice, rigid categorical thinking, half-truths and, above all, liberation from the tyranny of '-isms'.

The tyranny of nationalism and ethno-centre thinking is one of the worst 'mind-forged manacles' from which all South Africans have to free themselves. The study of the Classics can help in this process as well, precisely because it involves the study of shared cultures. To study Roman poetry is to study Greek; to read Cicero's philosophical texts is to read Plato; to look at Roman architecture is to look at Greek. Virgil draws on Homer but is uniquely Roman; Horace models his poems on Sappho, Alcaeus, Anacreon and Pindar but he is rooted in the Augustan age. He is *Romanae fidicen lyrae*, the player of the Roman lyre; but *fidicen* and *lyra* are Greek words.

Of course there were Romans who despised the Greeks and Greek culture in a desperate attempt to remain culturally exclusive. Cato railed against Greek decadence; Juvenal loathed and loved his Greek-struck Rome. Some Greeks thought that their culture was superior to Rome's; some Romans (and some nineteenth century Germans) thought the same. However, with hindsight, we see that neither was superior; both had their

strengths and weaknesses. But no-one can deny that the Greco-Roman culture was powerfully rich and varied.

Our first and third world unease is also complicated by cultural differences. The first world arrogantly looks down on 'emergent' third world 'elements'; the third world rejects first world culture as corrupt, bourgeois and flaccid. It is this sort of exclusivist thinking which years of apartheid have bred. However, our choice is not between Sophocles and Serote, between Exekias and Bushmen painting, between Virgil and Vilakazi. It is surely a choice between Sophocles, Serote and ignorance, between Exekias, Bushmen painting and prejudice, between Virgil, Vilakazi and sterile exclusivism. The Greco-Roman world offers us a paradigm which we ignore at our peril.

A shared culture is never created without tension or unease. It is lack of tension and unease which is allied to complacency and fat-cat cultural smugness, ego-bound and hostile to education. We have our Catos on both sides of the divide who rail against a Euro-African or an Afro-European culture. 'Hybrids never work', mutter the prophets of doom in university common rooms. But the Greco-Roman hybrid worked — the rough-hewn Romans vivifying the Greeks, growing tired and cynical, and showing that to share, borrow and adapt is to survive.

To appreciate fully the extent and nature of the Greco-Roman fusion, it is undeniably true that only a study of the Greek and Latin languages can suffice. Language forms the bones and sinews of culture and one cannot penetrate to the heart of Greco-Roman culture without the aid of the bones and sinews. And this is precisely where a new approach to the study of the Classics in South African universities is required if the discipline is to survive.

For far too long the bones have been rattled around without the flesh, without the heart. By that I mean that Latin and Greek have been taught as if they were intended to train but not to educate. To train the mind, to train the 'eye for detail', to improve one's English, to train lawyers to think logically. All admirable objectives but all admirably catered for by other disciplines in the sciences and the humanities. They are also objectives which contain an implicit *apologia*: Latin and Greek are innately useless so we had better look for a practical side-effect which will justify their use. What has been sorely neglected is the educative value of the study of Latin and Greek and this can only be experienced, in my opinion, by a fully contextualised approach to the teaching of Latin and Greek language and literature.

Courses like the Cambridge Latin course and the JACT Greek course have attempted to do this but they do not go far enough. Every word acquired should be rooted in the cultural environment, in the relationships, in the social, political and economic contexts

in which the word acquires meaning. To learn how to decline the noun *servus* is to learn what slavery is in ancient Rome; it is to learn when slaves can be subjects and why they are nearly always objects. *Servus* implies *serva, servitium, servilis, servitus, servitudo, servire* and *servare*: it also brings *dominus* and *libertus* to the fore and so the fabric of Roman society which touches on ours.

To Africanize the classics (or rather the teaching of the Classics) is not to research the African connection in Greek and Roman literature. It is *not* an in-depth study of 'Roman' Egypt or the archaeology of leptis Magna or the history of Jugurtha, King of Numidia, or the study of the Vandals or even idle speculations on how black Terence and Septimius Severus were. To Africanize the Classics is to contextualize for only in contextualization can there be heart-to-heart contact between Greco-Roman culture and our situation. Only with such contact can the Classics be truly involved in the process of education in which *all* need to participate if this country is to have any sort of future.

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SOME THOUGHTS ON THE STATE OF THE ARTS

by J. LIESKOUNIG

A self-critical look at the existing situation of the Arts and Humanities, especially at the University of Natal, Durban, undoubtedly reveals a lot of stagnation, provincialism and isolationism in various forms: our philosophy as a humanist faculty, our theoretical concepts and categories, as well as most intellectual models currently circulating, all reflect the permanent turmoil, the great frustration and explosive stagnation that we can see on a much wider scale in the country at large.

Drastic changes — evolutionary or revolutionary — seem inevitable in *all* areas, yet everyone keeps staring in a more or less transfixed manner at the political front as the only realm where eventual redemption — or damnation — will take place. But what are we as so-called humanists doing to develop and encourage adequately *radical* (starting from the roots) and at the same time appropriate thinking-structures and thought-models for this at present so unthinkable future? It seems superflous to remind ourselves that this semi-mythical future has of course already begun. The eventual and inevitable victory — if one may call it that — of reason, justice and equality in institutionalized forms will remain a superficial one and might even fail if we who are on top of the official educational and cultural pyramid, neglect the underlying and often hidden dialectics with all the contradictions and centrifugal dynamics of this progress, emancipation and development that will mark the 'new' society of the 'new' South Africa.

If we as academics believe in the enlightening and emancipatory powers of education and culture — and this seems to be the one essential premise on which all of our work is based — then we also accept that thinking and reasoning and critical reflection obviously form the most indispensable tools we have at our disposal to further the process of education, which is in itself dialectical. The continuing progress to more humanity, to an equal existence free of tutelage and domination, as The Enlightenment proclaimed, or to the contemporary concept of a dialogue without domination, as Habermas put it, must be founded upon innovative, critical and self-critical *open* thinking.

Do we as educators teach our students to think? Is thinking teachable? On what historical and social premises is our concept of development built? And what about peoples' education or alternative education? What thought-traditions and pre-assumptions — often hidden and unrecognized — underlie these

seemingly innovative and revolutionary concepts of education? Ought we not first of all to define and identify more clearly our own models of thinking, our concepts of cognition and knowledge that are in turn based on heavily weighted, preconditioned and eurocentric concepts like rationality, logic, critical approach, reasoning? And does that not imply the existence of a dominating cultural model which seems to triumph worldwide today? Can a counter-thinking be developed — and can it be taught? — that will transcend the seemingly overwhelming rationalist and neo-positivist thinking which — with its apparent objectivity derived from facts, statistical arguments, inescapable objective compulsions and necessities, its cost-effect imperative — is increasingly strangling intellectual life and open thinking in an ultimately dehumanizing total onslaught.

In accepting the need for this kind of rebellious thinking, we can at least try to counterbalance the ever-increasing consequences of the division of thinking that has gone hand in hand with the more visible division of labour. We in South Africa offer no exception to these processes and developments as we are caught and torn between the multitudes of incongruities and asynchronic dynamics that characterize our specific First-World/Third-World problematic.

No ahistorical and undialectic return to a naive holistic spiritual ideal is advocated here — rather we must try to excavate the structural pieces of our increasingly fragmented, simplistic thinking, and think ahead into the unknown openness of what needs to be thought. This must include criticising our criticism and finding the appropriate questions that have to be asked by ourselves and our students before we can proceed any further.

The negative dialectics of the thinking based on The Enlightenment with its ultimately totalitarian and dehumanising tendencies in the name of reason[1] should serve us as a permanent warning: we will have to think very carefully to avoid the temptations of abstract, value-free and objective reason on the one hand, and all the irrational alternatives on the other — be they reductionist, activist or redemptionist.

The category of critical thought, for instance, is a good example of the inherent dangers of closed, one-sided and undialectical thinking: driven to the absolutist extreme in a dogmatic and prescriptive manner it will quickly flip over and present its inhuman and anti-spiritual side. Critical thought as an approach must be engaged in dialectically and, consequently, the same goes for concepts like emancipation and humanist values in general. We must remind ourselves that the premises for any critical approach include that

— a critical position is in itself cultural value
— everything can be potentially criticized
— there is conceptually, at least, a utopian ideal state of the world which is beyond criticism.

These key-concepts of The Enlightenment have ever since formed part of the very foundation of education, development, emancipation and enlightenment. But do these categories themselves stand immovable in the constant flow of history? Do they not require constant reflecting on and rethinking? And what about their immanent contradictions, the processes of reification that may turn them into something counterproductive and negative? And what indeed about the paradox of those two fundamentally opposed poles of modern, rational, industrialized and civilized thinking: what exists is reasonable, and, what exists cannot be the true reality? Here we can see our dilemma as reasonable and reasoning creatures — the Scylla of a conformist acceptance of the state of our world with all its consequences, or the Charybdis of total negation and rejection of the bad reality around us. Somewhere in between these two perils we must think our way through.

The University talks frequently and responsibly of its role in society as a multi-cultural institution. That term multi-cultural implies not only an assumedly fixed definition of culture as an unquestionable value but also a possible equality of cultures with the self-understood and recognized goal of culturing its students. Is it not up to us, as cultural scientists, to question the validity and adequacy of this application of 'culture'? What about the fact K.-O. Apel reminds us of that 'these cultures, which had to and still have to adopt their scientific foundations and the technical-industrial way of living from Europe are being forced to a much greater distancing and alienation from their traditions than we'?[2]

Do we take this kind of problematic into account when we talk about multi-culturalism or alternative culture? And what about our own position vis-à-vis the dissemination of cultural knowledge that constitutes our academic work? By culture and cultural values do we mean

— humanistic values
— the belief that more knowledge is better than less
— critical abilities
— historical reflection and awareness
— the relevance and power of rational discourse
— the egalitarian concept of a just society?

Is this the intellectual and ethical-philosophical ground we stand on as academics? Does it have the potential for application and relevance for the concrete context in our university in this country?

Just how much are we afraid of having to let go comfortable certainties and long unquestioned premises and thus expose ourselves to the insecurities of permanently open thinking with all its risks and challenges?

And after the unavoidable institution of a nominally and legally equal society, what formidable spiritual challenges will lie ahead? The Golden Calf of a Free-Market-Society, the cultural (neo)colonization of a totally synchronized goods-and-consumer culture that will have wiped out irrevocably what Pasolini might have termed the 'culture of the bread'?[3] Are we able and prepared to equip our students with the necessary intellectual tools to counter the kind of omnipresent technical language — as opposed to a humanist one — that reflects the 'conditioned intelligence'[4] of the contemporary trimphant technocrat-manager-bureaucrat? And are we not supposed to lead the critical analysis and reflection of highly ambiguous concepts and categories like progress and development further as part of the historical discourse? Must we not try to come to terms with such disturbing verdicts as Horkheimer/Adorno's statement that 'the curse of unstoppable progress is unstoppable regression'?[5]

What could the cultural needs of our students be, today and tomorrow? Is it not up to us — and who else would be competent enough? — to develop potentially adaptable and appropriate thought-models for likely perspectives in this country's context? Or are we hoping too hard and too exclusively for a miraculously brighter future, a shiny new era just behind the bleak horizon of our present horrible — if comfortable — reality, without taking into account the historicity and inherent dynamics of such projections in themselves? For what we think and teach today will undoubtedly shape and determine (whether negatively or positively) what we teach and think tomorrow — a seemingly obvious platitude that is nevertheless well worth remembering.

Could there be a 'Third Way', however unthinkable and hidden from our limited historical viewpoint of today? Can there not be an alternative way of industrialization?[6] And does the possibility of a local, a genuinely homemade progress with a different role of technology exist? To problematize this kind of manifestation of the fundamental antagonism between thinking and reality surely falls into our sphere in the Humanities. And what about the cultural heritage — stepping stone or millstone in our search for a proper cultural and spiritual home? Do we not need a new society? But 'how can a new society be built with the help of the old sciences and the old morals?' as Trotsky asked more than fifty years ago.[7] Today we smile at Hegel's idealism — we know only too well that the divine reason manifesting and fulfilling itself in the history of the world[8] constitutes just another — if very powerful — myth. But at the very least the classical bourgeois idealism *did* contain a very

real desire for a better, more humane world. There was always the memory present of what potentially could be in our society. And after all, idealism has stubbornly insisted that 'the materialism of the bourgeois practice does not constitute the last word (in history)' and that 'mankind has to be led beyond that (phase).'[9]

Literature provides an example worth following for its kind of obstinate resistance to bad reality, for its tendency to refuse to be co-opted and to affirm the status quo. It has time and again shown its power to anticipate developments and changes, to forestall them even; it has demonstrated the ability to produce a fictional counter-world to the existing bad one; it has always been capable of constructing a utopian and imaginary alternative to the dominant and often inhuman and totalitarian reality. The 'lost truths'[10] of a happier life, of justice, dignity, solidarity and gentleness, continue to exist almost defiantly and against all bad reality in some literary texts. The ever-changing functions of literature are in themselves quite revealing — protest, subversion, defiance, parody and ridicule, utopianism, warning, escapism, resistance ... Literature has perhaps always been the most sensitive register of and responder to its historical times, even in its more hermetic and enciphered forms, and it is still a forceful antidote to the floods of seemingly logical reasoning to which we are subjected.

Finally, I should like to offer as a stimulus H. Marcuse's provocative verdict which, though directed at the advanced industrial civilization in the Western World, seems unexpectedly relevant and apt for this country. Such a type of civilization, he says, presents a 'shocking harmony of freedom and suppression, productivity and destruction, growth and repression'.[11] What seems to be important to me is that we, as intellectual workers, should neither succumb passively to the negative truths contained in these words nor escape into simplistic, pseudo-revolutionary rhetoric whose verbal activism often conceals a spiritual and intellectual emptiness. In the face of all adverse and oppressive reality, of all the weight of ideology and wrong conscience, we have to continue to keep at least our thinking open, to develop and teach counter-strategies. A mere description and recording, however critical, of all that represents this bad reality cannot be sufficient. Does the ultimate relevance of the Arts and Humanities not lie in their potential to exert at least some influence over the thinking of our and indeed the coming times?[12] And given the quality of our particular times, this must of necessity include a thinking against, on the one hand, and (self)critical, non-conforming, speculative and creative thinking, on the other.

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NOTES

1. See in particular M. Horkheimer/T.H. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt: Fischer 1969).
2. K.-O. Apel, 'Szientistik, Hermeneutik, Ideologiekritik' in K.-O. Apel, *Transformation der Philosophie II: Das Apriori der Kommunikations-Gemeinschaft* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1973), 120f.
3. An extension of Pasolini's term 'age of the bread'; see P.P. Pasolini, *Freibeuterschriften* (Berlin: Wagenbach 1978), 46.
4. K. Jaspers, *Kleine Schule des philosophischen Denkens* (München: Piper 1965), 165.
5. Horkheimer/Adorno, op. cit., 35.
6. H. Marcuse, *Der eindimensionale Mensch* (Darmstadt und Neuwied: Luchterhand 1967), 66.
7. L. Trotzkij, *Literatur und Revolution* (München: dtv 1972), 166.
8. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophie der Geschichte* (Stuttgart: Reclam 1961), in particular 48–61.
9. H. Marcuse, *Kultur und Gesellschaft I* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1980), 67.
10. H. Marcuse, op. cit., 82.
11. H. Marcuse, *Der eindimensionale Mensch* (Darmstadt und Neuwied: Luchterhand 1967), 140.
12. See also F. Nietzsche, 'Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie' in *Werke in zwei Bänden* (München: Hanser 1967), 114.

SOME THOUGHTS ON ENGLISH AS A *LINGUA FRANCA*

by M. VAN WYK SMITH

> It seems to me important to state at the earliest possible moment that both my parents were entirely English. I passionately believe in England and the English way of life. Indeed, I get on my knees every night and thank God for making me English. It is, after all, the greatest honour He has to bestow. He might have made me a chimpanzee or a flea, a Frenchman or a German. Instead, in His infinite mercy and compassion, He fashioned me as an Englishman and a mounted Englishman forby. It is a great responsibility, as well as the highest conceivable honour, and I am ever conscious of it.

Before any reader casts this article aside in disgust, let me hasten to point out that these words are not mine but emanate from one of the most objectionably hilarious books I have come across in a long time, Major A.D. Wintle's *The Last Englishman*. Since, however, talk about English as a world language still frequently elicits responses such as the above from people who should know better, I thought we might as well get them out of the way as soon as possible.

To set the joys of jingoism aside and to come a little closer to the English language, I turn to the more sober account of Godfrey Smith in *The English Companion*:

> **The English Language** Our greatest single national asset. Its capital value is unquantifiable. It is the first language in the world. It is the principal language of business and diplomacy. It has the richest literature and is the greatest treasury of fiction, poetry and drama. It is an exquisitely subtle and endlessly flexible tongue. It is crammed with idiom and slang. It is vastly hospitable to new words and fresh cultures. It is as earthy as it is elegant, as randy as it is fastidious. It is the language of the sea and the air, the international argot of all sea captains and airline pilots. It is the first language of sport and science. It is the language of computer software and hard rock. Any new young English or American writer has an immediate audience of 600 million; a young Armenian or Finn has no such luck. To this vast good fortune in life's lottery your average Englishman is totally impervious. He takes it as a matter of course that the world speaks English: what else would it speak?

Again, this popularly conceded status of English as at least the world's commercial, scientific, and transactional *lingua franca* is not something on which I want to dwell long, except to note that the sheer fact that, as Smith puts it, some 600 million people round the world speak or at least understand English, has been a source

of frustration, resentment, and outrage among Anglophobes as much as it has been an incentive to self-congratulation among the English. While some Anglophone writers have been grateful for their direct access to a world audience, others, particularly those from Britain's former colonies, have often chafed under the intolerable burden of having to express their deepest feelings in their conquerors' language. The ideological dislocation induced by this situation has driven several powerful Black writers — for instance, Oswald Mtshali in South Africa and Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Kenya — either into silence or into a decision no longer to write in English. At the English Academy Jubilee Conference in 1986, Professor Njabulo Ndebele of Roma University reminded us that 'the history of the spread of the English language throughout the world is inseparable from the history of the spread of English and American imperialism' (a point only too forcibly made by Major Wintle). Ndebele launched a spirited attack on the hidden cultural and political agendas still contained in this world dominance of English. While I have much sympathy for these anxieties, and would certainly wish to remain aware of them as a teacher of English, I cannot wish away the facts. I must accept that, for better or for worse, the diaspora of English is a historic phenomenon which has had certain fascinating implications, some of which in the area of literature I wish to explore.

If the English language is now a world language, English literature has become a world literature. In her 1987 inaugural lecture as King Edward VII Professor of English Literature in Cambridge, Marilyn Butler had this to say:

> Thanks to the world dominance of the United States, English is what Latin once was, a world language. But this also means that English literature will become what the Roman empire made Latin literature, and indeed Greek literature, too. It is the world's literary heritage we now need to consider.

The notion of English literature as a 'world literary heritage' means, of course, more than that metropolitan English writing is now studied all over the world, and that that literature is itself being daily augmented — and, indeed, displaced — by the growing literatures of other English speaking communities. It means, in fact, a continuous process of mutual appropriation, a familiar evolution whereby the language colonizes its new target cultures just as much as these cultures take possession of the language.

For English, whether the language or the literature, is not neutral. Language is the bearer of cultural and social values. The ideology of the tribe is deeply imbedded in the very fibres of its language, and English is no exception. Books, if they are of any

importance at all, carry meanings, and these meanings are not merely contained in the thoughts of the writer. They are there invisibly and subliminally in the medium itself, in the language. When I use the word 'liberty' I am not referring to quite the concept that an Afrikaans speaker might mean by 'vryheid', and not only because our individual histories may be quite different (in fact, they could be quite similar), but because the whole social, cultural and political process, the whole sociolinguistic evolution by which the word 'liberty' developed from its Latin and French roots the meaning it now has, is quite different from that by which 'vryheid' grew from its Germanic stock.

This complex built-in ideological code that a language carries in its deepest being, almost like a genetic code in cellular biology, has enormous implications when we think of English as a world language. As it has spread round the world English has imposed its patterns of value and thought on its host cultures, just as it has, of course, absorbed much from them. Language is not merely a medium *through* which we express our ideas or *by* which we describe reality. There is no conscious thought without language (we can only think thoughts when we have the language in which to think them), and there is no 'reality' out there which we can perceive or relate to meaningfully except by translating it into language. In other words, the world is a text which each of us has to 'read' and interpret in order to give it meaning. Much of this is linguistic commonplace.

It follows, then, that the language in which I think, in which I engage with reality, is going to influence fundamentally the 'reading' of reality which I produce. I am going to see, interpret, deduce, and act according to what my language allows me to, and I am going to be able to make only such distinctions as my language is equipped to handle. And when the need develops for the language to make new distinctions in order to cope with new experience and new territory, whether geographic or otherwise, the language must do two things: it must absorb, take possession of new words (and English, of course, contains a vast linguistic hoard rifled from other languages, from Afghan to Zulu), but — and this is for me the more intriguing even if somewhat insidious part of the process — it must also appropriate and colonize the new territory itself: it must, in the case before us, domesticate the unknown into the purlieus of Englishness.

Literature, as the record of this linguistic process, thus creates the reality which it is deemed to describe. Our very first poet, Thomas Pringle, seems to have appreciated the truth of this. Returning to Scotland with his clutch of South African poems in 1826, Pringle dedicated them to Sir Walter Scott in a sonnet which begins:

> From deserts wild and many a pathless wood
> Of savage climes where I have wander'd long,
> Whose hills and streams are yet ungraced by song,
> I bring, illustrious Bard, this garland rude.

Hardly a great poem, but the line 'whose hills and streams are yet ungraced by song' substantially expresses the point I am making: the 'deserts wild' and 'pathless wood' have not yet been brought into the realm of Englishness because not yet possessed or 'graced' by the language and its poetry. That the landscape was hardly 'ungraced' by indigenous song would have been immaterial to Pringle, however much a source of ironic observation to us. South African English literature has remained the story of how that linguistic appropriation of the new land and its people has been effected. Pringle's own prose description of the Albany Suurveld is one of the most explicit examples of the process. In the following passage he depicts the developing settler community just south of the present Grahamstown:

> The general aspect of the country was, nevertheless, fresh, pleasing, and picturesque. The verdant open pastures, and smooth grassy knolls, formed an agreeable contrast with the dark and dense masses of the sweeping forests, which clothed the deep glens and broken country near the river courses. The undulating surface of the champaign country was moreover often pleasingly diversified with scattered groves or large straggling trees, intermixed with thickets of evergreens and clumps of mimosas. In the lower bottoms, wherever a brook or fountain had been discovered, and the light mould washed from the higher grounds presented a richer and deeper soil for cultivation, we found the poor Emigrant at work in his field or garden; his reed hut or wattled cabin generally placed on the side of some narrow valley, under the shade of a grove or thicket; his cattle kraal and sheep fold, his garden fence, and even the division boundary from his neighbour's field, or the common lane, often carefully ditched and wattled with that peculiar neatness and taste which the English peasant alone displays in such circumstances.

The ordering vision of the observer is here imposed on the 'deserts wild' and 'pathless wood' to a quite startling extent. Not only are the social and agricultural features of the land thoroughly anglicized, but the very words used ('verdant open pastures', 'smooth grassy knolls', 'champaign country', 'grove or thicket', 'wattled cabin', etc.) and the ordered cadences of the classical English sentence combine with the carefully progressive sweep of the eye over the scene (from a general view to the individual cabin and the English peasant) and the terminology and recipe of eighteenth century landscape painting ('general aspect',

'picturesque', the movement from high ground to low ground and open space to closed space) to suggest a total colonization of this really very African scene, rendered here almost unrecognizable.

Examples of the appropriating procedures of the language, whereby possession is enacted through discourse, are rarely as blatant as this, but subtler examples constitute most of our literature, from Olive Schreiner to J.M. Coetzee, and they are not, of course, limited to South African writing. The Northern Irish poet, Seamus Heaney, has repeatedly drawn attention to the secret and ancient contest between the Irish landscape and the English language which parallels the more visible aspects of strife in his country. And one of the most penetrating statements of the theme is still Robert Frost's 'The Gift Outright', which situates the same process at the heart of American literature:

> The land was ours before we were the land's.
> . . . the land vaguely realizing westward,
> But still unstoried, artless, unenhanced,
> Such as she was, such as she would become.

We must, however, turn to the other end of the process, the case of the indigenous writer from a land colonized by the British who has taken over the language, internalized much of its cultural and literary traditions, and then re-colonized the parent language with his own concepts in order to produce something strikingly new. I refer to Oswald Mtshali's 'The Master of the House':

> Master, I am a stranger to you,
> but will you hear my confession?
>
> I am a faceless man
> who lives in the backyard
> of your house.
>
> I share your table
> so heavily heaped with
> bread, meat and fruit
> it huffs like a horse
> drawing a coal cart.
>
> As the rich man's to Lazarus,
> the crumbs are swept to my lap
> by my Lizzie:
> 'Sweetie! eat and be satisfied now,
> Tomorrow we shall be gone.'
>
> So nightly I run the gauntlet,
> wrestle with your mastiff, Caesar,
> for the bone pregnant with meat
> and wash it down with Pussy's milk.

I am the nocturnal animal
that steals through the fenced lair
to meet my mate,
and flees at the break of dawn
before the hunter and the hounds
run me to ground.

A first glance readily shows the poem to be a protest poem, making an obvious socio-economic and political statement. It presents feelingly that traditional phenomenon of the South African way of life, the faceless domestic who lives in the white man's backyard, miraculously appears at given times to do his work, but otherwise has no significant existence, feelings or ties. And if she has a husband or companion, as in this poem, he is in most senses of the word non-existent, or at worst a bad dream for the owner, who, if he saw him at all, is likely to send for the police and police dogs, the hunter and the hounds.

All this is true and important, yet it is also arguable that the poem moves on other levels of meaning as well. The request from a stranger to hear a confession invokes the central act of penitence in Roman Catholic practice, in which the confessant is supposed to be anonymous and the confession itself highly confidential. A current of irony is thus released which runs right through the poem, suggesting the urge of the confessant to tell the truth, but the truth he tells is really the truth about the 'master', the confessor, who is increasingly edged into the unbearable situation of having to hear a confession which is not only embarrassing but distinctly threatening. As confessor, however, he is powerless to do anything about what he is told, and again we have an ironic revelation of the extent to which the white man is trapped in his own prejudices and fears. Furthermore, in seeking to confess his mere existence as though it were a sin, the black man sharpens the sardonic force of the indictment he is making.

It comes as no suprise to learn that Mtshali is from the second generation of a Christian family educated at the Roman Catholic mission station of Inkamana in Natal. The poem is full of religious echoes, most of them ironic: the table heaped with bread, the rich man and Lazarus, and Isaiah 22:13 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die', which is echoed in the middle of the poem. Macaulay warned a long time ago that 'no one should set up as a critic of English literature who has not got the Bible at his finger's end', and such a reader would know that the preceding verse in Isaiah reads:

> And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth.

But the layer of biblical allusion in the poem is not the end of the story. I suggested earlier that most readers would see in the hunter and the hounds a reference, quite correctly, to that well-known South African institution, the pre-dawn police 'klopjag'. But some would also see in it a reference to Orion, the hunter and the hounds of Greek stellar legend, whose constellation rises due east and is therefore traditionally associated with the rising sun. It is a prominent dawn constellation in our winter, and there is a long literary tradition of associating dawn with the hunter and the hounds, a possible echo being captured in the opening lines of Edward Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*:

> Awake! for Morning in the Bowl of Night
> Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight:
> And Lo! the Hunter of the East has caught
> The Sultan's Turret in a Noose of Light.

When I turned to the *Rubaiyat* to confirm my memory, I found that there were several further echoes of the work in Mtshali's poem — the name of Caesar (Mtshali's mastiff) and something dropping in the speaker's lap (Mtshali's 'the crumbs are swept to my lap') occur in one and the same stanza in the *Rubaiyat*; there are references to the sufficiency of bread; and the sentiment 'here today and gone tomorrow' not only recurs several times, but underlies the whole mood of seductive fatalism that Fitzgerald's poem expresses. Furthermore, the *Rubaiyat* holds out the promise of a world in which distinctions between master and servant will disappear, 'Where name of Slave and Sultan scarce is known'.

Again one recollects that the *Rubaiyat* is a centre-piece of that most famous of all school anthologies of classical English literature, Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, which was still a standard work in English classrooms in South Africa in the 1950s, when Mtshali was in high school.

Now, it is quite possible that Mtshali (or anyone else, for that matter) could disclaim any knowledge of or overt reference to either Orion or the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* on the poet's part. Such an objection would, however, miss the point. By electing to write in English, and to write with the maximum semantic force of the words of English, a writer plugs his imagination into a power network of language to which all past works of the imagination and, indeed, every user of the language have contributed. There thus exists what Douglas Dunn has called 'a vernacular of compassion' (Haffenden, 1981: 32), a record of the total human experience of the users of that language on which, in turn, the new writer can draw and develop.

So I do not believe that one has to prove Mtshali's actual acquaintance with the sources I have mentioned to make the claims I have made. On the contrary, I believe that the full power of the poem is the complex product of a broad diversity of possible origins and influences, metamorphosed in the poet's imagination into a profound socio-political statement which depends for its force on Mtshali's reworking of the language he has acquired and to which, in turn, he has substantially contributed. In short, Mtshali has powerfully re-colonized the language, and has set up a constitutive discourse which has effectively remade the South African 'reality'.

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RACISM: A CHALLENGE TO SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

by M.M.A. GRAY and A.J. BERNSTEIN

No social institution functions in a vacuum. Universities are an integral part of the wider community and must be responsive to social needs. This does not mean, however, that they only respond to needs as society expresses them but are also able to make projections of future trends and requirements. Universities have a moral obligation to lead rather than follow, to innovate, to question and debate social issues, and through relevant research to find possible solutions to societal dilemmas. Universities in South Africa have a special responsibility to work towards the dismantling of apartheid and the achievement of a fair and just society.

Universities have a greater 'potential for freedom of action' than other educational institutions (Van den Berg, 1987, p. 21). A major challenge facing universities in South Africa today is how they use this potential. One of the ways in which the University of Natal, amongst others, has responded is by opening its doors to students selected on merit rather than colour. Opening the university in this way has brought with it new problems and challenges including a significant change in the student population.

Students of all races now enter the university where they have the opportunity to interact freely with one another in a non-racial environment. While the university provides the opportunity for free interaction, this does not occur automatically (Leon and Lea, 1988): it has to be learnt. For the university then, there is a need to restructure and redesign courses and curricula, and to assist students to adjust to their new environment and each other in an informed and discerning way. To facilitate the process, students need to be sensitized to each other's different world-views, and to develop knowledge of the inequalities inherent in the social system of which they are part. This has particular application for social work students.

All professions are informed in their work by a given system of values which is embodied in an ethical code. The primary social work values emphasize that people should have equal access to resources, services and opportunities and that social conditions should be conducive to the achievement of optimal social functioning. Professional social work relationships are built on a regard for individual worth, human dignity and the right to self-determination (Pincus and Minahan, 1973; Simons and Aigner, 1985). This is directly in line with the attainment of social justice which is a crucial task for open universities concerned with the

achievement of a 'harmoniously ordered common society' (Webb, 1987, p. 9).

Social work educators need, therefore, to focus on the transfer of these values into practice: to develop in students an awareness of their own values, and at the same time, to engender awareness of what C. Wright Mills (1959) called 'the public issues of social structure'. One of the ways in which the Department of Social Work has tried to achieve this dual purpose is through a racial awareness programme designed to sensitize students to racial issues and at the same time to enhance their ability to work co-operatively with one another. We called this the *Working Together* programme. Before describing the programme in detail, its theoretical base will be discussed.

The *Working Together* programme must be conceptualized within the framework of a general social theory, which explores the relations between action, institutions, power and domination. Such a theory must take into account the institutional and structural conditions of social action (Thompson, 1985). It is important to grasp the interplay between action and social structure. Structure is defined as the rules and resources which are implicitly drawn upon by actors in their everyday activity and which are thereby reproduced, most often unintentionally. In this conceptualization, structure is a necessary condition for the continuation of a particular type of society and for the persistence of social life.

Racism awareness programmes aim to enhance understanding and acceptance of the customs and behaviour of people from different races and cultures. For whites especially, living in the apartheid system normalizes racism. Acceptance of this state of affairs is encouraged by the segregation of the races so that one can co-exist with poverty and suffering without ever encountering it directly. There is a need for white people to question everyday discriminatory practices and to realize how their own attitudes and behaviour perpetuate racism. Thus racism awareness empowers people to make informed decisions in their everyday life. Powerlessness is associated with the black experience of South African society. Racial awareness programmes can be used to equip people with the necessary skills to assert their rights and exercise their interpersonal influence in the performance of valued social roles (Solomon, 1976).

It might be argued that without structural change the problem of racism is not being addressed. However, the process which Freire (1970) called 'conscientisation' is an important one. It helps individuals make connections between the social relations they endorse or perpetuate through their attitudes, values and behaviour and the social positions they occupy. Thus racism

awareness programmes challenge the fundamental misconceptions which lead to the unwitting reproduction of social life in every individual discriminatory action and connect the individual, organizational and structural components of social interaction. Dominelli (1988) points out that anti-racism awareness training takes changing the system as its central point and 'attempts to deconstruct racism by demonstrating how what one does as an individual fits into organisational and societal policies and practices' (p. 73).

The *Working Together* programme described in this paper is an ideal vehicle for this task. It is based on the premise that while direct, close interaction with members of another race is a necessary condition for change, it is not sufficient. Amir (1976), in consolidating fifty years of research into the effects of racial integration and separation, noted the importance of sustained, intimate and co-operative contact which is pleasant and positive, involves equal status relations and institutional support.

To meet the difficulty of quantifying and measuring racial attitudes, or changes in attitudes, Strober and Grady (1978) suggested the use of the concept of racial awareness. It includes the capacity to perceive racial issues from different points of view, knowledge of different points of view, knowledge of racial issues and awareness of one's feelings about members of other races. Such awareness, while important, was not considered sufficient in the South African situation, unless it could be translated into specific forms of behaviour. According to Fox (1983), the most effective courses in racism achieve affective learning through an experiential component which combines behavioural assignments with interaction between members of different race groups. Consistent with these findings, an experiential programme, which facilitates co-operative problem-solving through self awareness training and skill development in the context of small groups, was developed within the social work curriculum.

Students are actors in society whose behaviour can be modified to enable them to take positive action to eradicate racist social work practice and to discourage them from participating in institutional practices which promote racism. Through educating social work students who will be alerted to discrimination in all its forms and committed to the values of the profession, the social work educator and the university have a unique opportunity to contribute to social change.

On reviewing the relevant literature it became evident that courses which emphasized only content were extremely limiting. Alternative approaches stress the need to provide students with experiences that promote self-awareness and sensitivity, help develop new patterns of behaviour, and encourage them to deal

with their concerns openly and constructively. The use of experiential groups places the responsibility for learning with the individual group member. They require that teachers adopt a non-directive, flexible, and creative approach dealing with important issues as they arise through discussion and review. In order to enhance total learning, it is the responsibility of the teacher to set the tone, to create the kind of climate in which students will feel free to discuss feelings, values, and attitudes honestly (Kagwa, 1976).

Based on the literature reviewed (Bernstein and Gray, 1988) and personal knowledge and experience of the South African situation, the *Working Together* programme was devised. It combined a cognitive social learning approach with self-awareness and skill development through group participation. The programme formed the practice component of a course on social work values and ethics. The emphasis was on experiential learning and group process.

The programme provided an opportunity for a multi-cultural, multi-racial group of first year undergraduate social work students to work together and participate freely in a series of structured experiences in problem-solving. The programme required the participants to reflect on their own conceptual frameworks and the manner in which these influenced their behaviour. Its purpose was to achieve a combination of awareness and behaviour change which would go beyond the classroom environment. It was, therefore, important that the participants should learn the process of developing awareness and controlling their own behaviour. Two aspects of the self-management procedures described by Kanfer and Phillips (1970) were used. These involved (1) training participants in self-observation, evaluation and analysis of their own behaviour, and (2) re-arranging the environment or their own acts on the basis of learning procedures.

The first goal, self-observation, was facilitated by the use of pre- and post-course videotaped sessions. In viewing their own behaviour and through participation in these sessions students were able to evaluate their initial level of functioning and to compare it with the level they had reached by the end of the course. Analysis of behaviour was based on the format developed by Rose, Cayner and Edleson (1977). In attempting to measure interpersonal competence they defined, in specific operational terms, the actions which constituted appropriate interpersonal interaction. Students were thus supplied with an outline of optimal forms of behaviour and were asked to assess their own functioning in relation to these. Students evaluated each session on Rose's (1981) outcome criteria. These included their participation in the group, their perception of group cohesion (indicated on a

satisfaction scale), and the success of the group in achieving its goals. The evaluation instrument also provided the opportunity for students to describe their feelings and to make suggestions for future sessions.

Students were divided into heterogeneous twelve member groups which remained constant for all activities. The programme was based on a five stage model of group development. The first stage aimed at creating a beginning awareness through providing students with the opportunity to interact with each other and to observe their own behaviour.

Stage two had a dual focus: firstly, clarifying racist attitudes and secondly, providing a suitable knowledge base which would inform their understanding of structural, legal and historical factors pertinent to South Africa. The development of appropriate behavioural skills took place in stage three while stage four involved the application of the problem-solving skills which had been learnt, to a specific situation. The goal of the fifth and final stage was the transfer of the knowledge and skills acquired to life outside of the classroom.

In the first stage the programme needed to create the opportunity for the process of racial awareness to begin. The medium was a structured problem-solving exercise which required a co-operative model of functioning. The situation presented was the choice of a negotiating team for resolving the political conflict in South Africa. This was an issue which excited students and provided an ideal stimulus for enhanced group interaction. Group cohesion was quickly established and students became very involved in the group activity.

The group discussion and interaction was videotaped, and then viewed by the students who rated their participation, specific forms of behaviour and feelings using behaviourally specific rating scales. In order to reduce bias, the purpose of the programme and lecturer/student expectations were discussed after the completion of the problem-solving exercise. The opportunity was taken to create the desired climate of openness and involvement.

As noted, stage two had a dual focus: firstly, clarifying racial attitudes and stereotypes and secondly, providing students with factual information about South African social reality. In relation to the first goal, use was made of structured exercises and discussion of common experiences. Students began to know and trust one another through sharing information about their varied life experiences, similarities and differences. Topics for discussion were suggested and the specific choice left open to students. This exercise encouraged reflection on personal values and the importance of these in determining behaviour. It was particularly important in the current political context as students realised their

human similarities rather than the differences imposed by the social system.

A series of exercises on discriminatory stereotypes was adapted from the *Human Awareness Programme* (1983). These were designed to develop awareness of discrimination on the basis of race, sex, age and class.

Most students responded postively and many communicated openly and meaningfully for the first time with members of other race groups. There were, however, differences in individual responses with the first class that went through the programme. Black students participated less verbally than white students and their attendance decreased in the second and third sessions. The black students were invited to attend a meeting with the lecturers to discuss their reactions to the programme. With some encouragement they were able to ventilate their feelings of discomfort on hearing negative attitudes expressed by white students. They also spoke of the programme being relevant for white students who needed to learn about discrimination and that it was not the function of the black students to teach them this. Recognition was given to these feelings and to the black experience as a special source of knowledge. At the same time their own stereotypes of whites were challenged. The programme goals of increasing awareness of discriminatory attitudes and practices and changing behaviour through co-operation in groups, were reiterated and discussed. This kind of reaction is not atypical (Mirelowitz and Grossman, 1975, p. 81) and the importance of openness, honesty and the need to confront student issues at the time they arise, must be stressed. Interestingly, the following session had the highest attendance and level of participation of black students.

Based on this experience, future classes included a discussion of the need to see stereotyping, discrimination and a tendency to ethnocentrism as shared concerns. The instrument developed by Lee and Schmidt (1982) describing assumptions and ways of behaving which block or facilitate authentic relations between blacks and whites has been useful in this regard.

The second goal of this stage was the need for students to acquire knowledge in relation to the South African socio-political system and its discriminatory effect. This was achieved through an inter-group quiz using questions prepared by each group from *The Apartheid Handbook* (Omond, 1985). All students were thus involved in the research needed to prepare questions and in learning the information needed for the answers. This activity generated a high level of student involvement and group cohesion. The competitive element created an atmosphere of excitement making this acquisition of knowledge an enjoyable experience.

The second area of the required knowledge base was the presentation of a problem-solving model (Compton and Galaway, 1984). This was a didactic session in which students were provided with a written copy of the model, each stage was reviewed and questions answered.

In the third stage, each group was given a practical problem to resolve. Emphasis was laid on the process of group problem-solving, rather than on finding a solution. In discussing the group's observtions of its activities and interaction, participants were able to identify the need for communication, assertiveness and empathy skills to enable individuals to function effectively and contribute positively to the group effort.

Students were then taken through a series of role play situations which demanded the use of these skills. Lecturers demonstrated each skill and coached particpants until the required level of competence had been achieved.

The fourth stage required the application of appropriate problem-solving behaviour to a complex moral dilemma. Students had to apply their knowledge and skills in the group problem-solving process. The exercise was videotaped and students again rated their group interaction, participation and specific behaviour on the same rating scale.

Evaluations of each session varied considerably in terms of individual activity, productivity and perception of group cohesion. However, evaluations of what had been learned from the course were extremely positive. Student satisfaction with the course was also high. Students raised issues such as the opportunity to discuss racism and apartheid openly in a racially mixed group which they had not been able to do before; the reality and honesty which characterized the course; and the feelings of unity which were generated.

An important aspect of any intervention is that there should be generalization of the change outside of the therapeutic milieu (in this case the classroom). There was an emphasis throughout the programme on the application of what had been learned to the wider environment. The final evaluation of the course asked students to assess personal change and set future goals. All the students commented on the development of self-awareness, clarification of their own values and increasing tolerance and acceptance of others. The confidence to express a viewpoint and to participate in group discussions was mentioned more frequently by black students. These were obviously subjective responses not amenable to systematic or objective measurement. The evaluation of the programme is an important area for future research and development.

Like the University, social work and social work education are at

an important stage of their development particularly in South Africa. Students are being educated to live and work in a society which is in a state of constant change. Under these conditions knowledge and practices which were adequate in the past cannot be assumed to be sufficient for the present or future.

The argument presented in this paper suggests that if a South African university is to have any relevance in this country it cannot ignore the issue of racism. While an academic understanding of racism is facilitated by a knowledge base in the social sciences, social work, with its roots in social reform, its value base and its community links, is in a unique position to develop programmes in this area. One such programme has been described. Its focus on racism awareness was shown to be relevant and appropriate to the South African social context.

South African universities have to commit themselves to future change, not only in terms of a changing student population but in terms of major societal change. While students are an important target for racism awareness training, the university is also part of the wider community and has a responsibility to that constituency. The *Working Together* programme has been developed specifically for social work students, however, it holds possibilities for application in the total student population and through community-based adult education courses. A university which is truly concerned with education needs 'to liberate, to open up the mind, to prepare people to create, to reform culture, to change to question ... (and) to act' (Meerkotter, 1987, p. 40). Through racism awareness training, the university can fulfil this educational role and ensure its relevance to the changing social context.

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REJOINDER TO 'OPPOSING APARTHEID': BUILDING A SOUTH AFRICAN DEMOCRACY THROUGH A POPULAR ALLIANCE WHICH INCLUDES LENINISTS

by P. ERIC LOUW

Mervyn Frost makes a number of valid points concerning the creation of a democratic political culture in his article 'Opposing Apartheid: democrats against the Leninists'. The creation of such a political culture is indeed a crucial dimension to the struggle against apartheid, which we South Africans ignore at our own long-term peril. However, the binary opposition that Frost sets up of 'democrats versus Leninists' is a problematic one which needs further examination.

Politics is a messy process in reality; a process in which idealized reified models tend to obscure as much as they reveal. To apply the two idealized models of what constitutes 'a Leninist' and of a 'Weberian democrat' simply ignores the complex blurring of issues and the debates actually found within the broad emerging alliance that characterises the anti-apartheid movement, both locally and internationally. Polan may raise some interesting ideas concerning 'democratic politics' outside of the context of South African politics, but what Frost, for example, makes no mention of, is the existence of debates about democracy within the South African counter-hegemony[1], some of which emerge from, amongst others, the ultra-leftist and other Marxist factions. If Leninists, as Polan claims, 'ended politics' in the post-revolutionary Soviet Union, there is no evidence to suggest that South African Leninists believe they should, or more importantly could, attempt such an 'end'. Frost creates the impression that South African Leninists would automatically be opposed to democracy, whereas, in fact, the adoption of the 'two-stage' theory of revolution by the South African Communist Party (who are presumably the 'Leninists' Frost speaks of), as well as the SACP's working *within* the broader counter-hegemonic alliance belies Frost's thesis. The SACP and the Leninists have in fact been criticized by certain of the ultra-leftists in South Africa for their 'collaborationist' stance. Since Leninists are more likely to be found within the SACP (and hence within the wider alliance), it is rather certain of the ultra-leftists who locate themselves *outside* the democratic movement who, one could *perhaps* argue — i.e. from a Weberian position — are unprepared to work within democratic structures which require that 'compromise politics' be played in order that hegemony be built.

That Frost ignores the de facto realism shown by South African 'Leninists' in their 'two-stage' theory is an excellent illustration of precisely how idealized and reified models (of, for example, what constitutes a 'textbook' Leninist) often obscure the realities in specific contexts. The 'two-stage' theory, far from representing an example of 'an end to politics', precisely represents a Marxist-Leninist 'concession' to 'realpolitik': it is the offer to help and work alongside non-Leninists to create a bourgeois democracy in the hope that this will later lead to conditions which favour the creation of a 'full' socialist state. This must surely constitute 'real' politic at its most developed: South African Leninists are working with nationalists, social democrats and left-liberals with *no* real guarantee that this policy will help them achieve *their* goal of a socialist society. Of course, the SACP assumption is that there will be a continuous 'flow' from stage one to stage two. On the basis of an interview with an SACP official, British academic, Basil Davidson (1976), says the SACP assumes that the liberation struggle will bring to power a revolutionary democratic alliance dominated by the proletariat and peasantry. The assumption is that the resulting post-revolutionary phase will then become the first stage in a continuous process along the road to socialism: a road that ultimately will be charted by the proletariat and its natural allies.

In fact, this particular (two-stage) policy is quite likely *not* to lead to the achievement of what the Leninist would regard as a 'full' socialist society, because of inertia. Certainly many South African workerists have voiced this concern (Erwin, 1985: 67–68; Lambert, 1980). The workerist concern is that 'stage one' will be a social-democrat society based on an 'inclusivist' nationalism, presumably dominated by a 'non-racial' but primarily black petit bourgeoisie. However, once such a stage is achieved, a 'working arrangement', an alliance, between this new petit bourgeois ruling group and monopoly capital is quite likely to be reached. This new 'arrangement' will then block the emergence of 'full' socialism. This is, of course, precisely the socialist critique of post-1980 Zimbabwe. With the current balance of forces in the counter hegemony tending toward a popular multi-class alliance, and with even the majority of the Leninists agreeing on the 'two-stage' approach, it now seems more than likely that the workerist critique will end up being a prediction. Given this scenario, Polan's notions seem a little out of place in the South African context.

When trying to create a democracy out of a struggle against a right-wing regime, as in the South African scenario, what is important is the nature of the *actual* political practices of building the counter-hegemony. To understand the building of the South African counter-hegemony must consequently involve more than

imposing idealized (and supposedly universal) models on to the South African scene. It should rather involve trying to grasp the actual (historically and materially specific) complex processes of alliance building, compromise and conflict within the counter-hegemony itself. In this regard, if theoretical texts are sought to understand contemporary South African Marxist analysis and its input into the processes of local counter-hegemony construction, then, instead of looking at Polan, it might be more (or at least as) instructive to look at texts which have influenced the Marxists and/or Leninists within the South African counter-hegemony themselves. In this regard Gramsci (1978) and Poulantzas (1979, 1982) may be valuable starting points. Furthermore, Frost makes no mention of any of the seminal South African 'Marxist' texts which might have been useful in any 'appraisal' of the Marxist impact both within and outside the counter-hegemonic alliance. Some of the more important of these texts would be: Alexander (1985); Innes and Plaut (1978); Davies *et al.* (1976); Erwin (1985); Legassick (1974); and Wolpe (1972). It is too glib simply to equate contemporary Marxism and its Marxist-Leninist variant (and especially a phenomenon as historically and materially specific as contemporary South African Marxism and/or Marxist-Leninism) with some reified model of either 'Leninism' or 'Marxism'. It is necessary to understand that Marxists and Marxist-Leninists have learnt a great deal since Lenin, including learning from their mistakes. This becomes even more the case when it is remembered that Marxists always insist on adapting themselves and their theories to each specific context (a core theme in historical materialism). This means that no idealized, supposedly generic, model of 'Leninism' can accurately reflect real leftist political practices in a situation as historically and materially specific as contemporary South Africa.

The emerging counter-hegemony and its close allies are far more complex than Frost's characterization would suggest. Firstly, Frost makes no mention of such differences as exist between, for example, the Marxist Workers Tendency/Inqaba; Marxists within the SACP; Marxists outside the SACP; workerist populists; popular workerists; Fosatu workerists; and the various positions taken by Left-intellectuals. Instead, he oversimplifies and reifies the notion Leninist.

Secondly, to collapse the complexity of the counter-hegemony into 'black opposition politics' (Frost, 1985: 15) is problematic because what one rather finds in South African opposition politics are the following.

(a) A specifically black opposition politics, which ironically does *not* use Solidarity-type organization methods. Examples of 'black opposition politics' in South Africa would be the Black

Consciousness Movement (BCM), the Pan African Congress (PAC), and the Azanian Peoples Organisation (AZAPO).

(b) A non-racial opposition politics, of which a significant section does, to some extent, use Solidarity-type methods. The closest one comes to Solidarity-type politics in South Africa — i.e. the United Democratic Front (UDF) — is, in fact, precisely characterized by conscious efforts to avoid being exclusively 'black' politics, and to incorporate 'non-black' members (See *Jodac News*, No. 1, 1988: 14–15). As the UDF publicity secretary stated: 'We are non-racial, which means that we embrace all races ... and all classes' (Lekota, 1983: 80). The non-racial UDF alliance sometimes takes the form of groups that transcend race, such as the National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA), and sometimes assumes the form of mobilization 'using' (for 'non-racial ends) 'racial' mobilization[2], such as the Natal Indian Congress (NIC); Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee (JODAC); Cape Democrats; or Durban Democratic Association (DDA).

(c) A third category would be the Unity Movement (UM) and/or New Unity Movement, a largely (but not exclusively) Western Cape phenomenon, which is sometimes labelled 'Trotskyist'. UM — the smallest of the three sectors of 'opposition politics' — takes the form of a workerist populism, and does *not* employ a Solidarity-type organization. UM conflates elements from both 'Marxism' and 'Black Consciousness'. Since UM opposes the SACP's 'two-stage' theory of revoluton (i.e. favours a 'one-stage' approach; 'hard-line' non-collaboration approach; and a 'smashing the state' approach) this grouping is ironically closer to Frost's 'category' of 'Leninism' than the people *within* the Solidarity-type structures whom he attributes 'Leninism' to.

Thirdly, the emerging counter-hegemony, as organized by the UDF, is characterized by 'popular' political practices rather than by a populism, as Frost suggests. To collapse the categories 'popular', 'populist' and 'Solidarity-type' is too simplistic to cope with the realities of South African politics. Populist practices are *not* the same as popular practices. 'Populism' in South Africa is more clearly represented by Inkatha on the Right (see Mare, 1987), or by Black Consciousness on the Left; whereas 'popular' political practice is represented by the UDF and its affiliates. Populism represents a 'top-down' manipulation (a la Buthelezi of Kwa-Zulu or Peron of Argentina) of popular resentments which are then welded into a political force for change (usually, but not always, of a reformist nature). Popular practice attempts to generate a grass-roots and decentralized approach towards mobilizing popular resentments; which specifically rejects the

top-down 'leadership' approach of populism. This is a crucial distinction missed by Frost, and it is a distinction that is important if one is to understand the nature of the 'Leninist's' relationship to the other parties in the emerging South African popular counter-hegemony. Popular political practice is an open-ended process which seldom operates as predicted by idealized political models. The crucial point is that South African popular political practice — as exemplified by the Charterists — is precisely organised as an alliance: an alliance unified not so much by rigid hierachy, or a single ideology, but by the common goal of trying to shorten the life of the apartheid state. Although the clearest example of such a popular alliance is the UDF, it must be noted that the ANC also has its orgins in Charterist alliance political practice. However, since the ANC is forced to operate primarily in exile, with its internal cadres having to operate underground, the ANC's ability to operate a working internal popular alliance-type politics is obviously restricted. It must be noted though that within the Charterist alliance are a *whole range* of opinions *including Leninists*, but also including social democrats, liberals and nationalists. The attitude within the ANC, for example, would appear to be that *all* are welcome as long as *each* constituent part of the alliance — including the SACP, the Leninists, and others — is prepared to work *within* the democratic popular structures. This has two implications. The first is an acceptance of the alliance's common goal. In the case of the contemporary South African anti-apartheid counter-hegemony this goal is simply to remove the apartheid state. If this alliance came to power at the present time indications are that its policy would at most be a social-democrat one (i.e. not a Leninist, or even 'full' socialist policy). The second implication is the right of every party within the counter-hegemonic alliance to try and 'push' their own particular strategy, approach and/or policy within the alliance as long it is not destructive to the broader goals of the alliance. Such an approach is presumably the very basis of democracy as understood by Weberians.

By all accounts the SACP and the Leninists within the counter-hegemony are adhering to the 'rules' of this alliance politics. They are obviously trying to further their own particular 'preferred goals' (as is every other party in the alliance) while still co-operating to build up the power of the wider non-Leninist alliance (i.e. subsuming their goals to the wider goals of all). The position of the broader popular democratic alliance appears to be that the Leninists are welcome allies *up until* the social democrat stage (what the SACP calls the 'first — or 'bourgeois' — stage' of the revolution) is reached, and then the SACP can part ways, if it so wishes, to pursue its own 'second stage', that is, the revolution to

overthrow the 'bourgeois stage' it has just helped establish. To exclude Leninists from the process — a proposal that might be inferred from Frost's article — would damage the effectiveness of the existing alliance by excluding an important and hard-working sector within the current struggle against apartheid, and would, of course, be an undemocratic act (in the Weberian sense) in itself. If anything, the attempt to create this very working diversity and 'tolerance' within the counter-hegemonic alliance, and secondly, the 'moderate' and conciliatory attitude adopted by Leninists themselves within this alliance should, if anything, give South Africans (even Weberians) hope that a democratic political culture will possibly emerge after the civil war has played itself out.

The notion, in Frost's article, that there are two main 'approaches' or 'views' informing 'black opposition politics' is, furthermore, grounded in a highly idealistic view of politics. This reduces politics to the realm of ideas. Historical materialists would argue that one needs to go further. Initially, one must look at ideas as they intersect with real material interests. To use a Poulantzian approach, each component of the anti-apartheid alliance represents a different material interest just as surely as it represents an 'ideal'. Building the counter-hegemony entails working out the necessary compromises between the various interests within the alliance such that a unified opposition is created. Once this is recognized it becomes impossible to reduce anti-apartheid politics to only two ideals/approaches — i.e. Leninist and democratic. Ironically, these two particular 'ideals/approaches' are actually interwoven in a rather complex way with the actual sub-components — and/or 'interests' — within the South African counter-hegemony. So, for example, at any one moment one might find that the 'democratic option' is actually being advocated by the workerists and/or the Leninists rather than the liberals within the alliance, i.e. it is not inconceivable that in a specific instance the liberal (rightest) wing of the counter-hegemony may see democratic practices as harming the possible achievement of their specific constituency's bourgeois, or petit bourgeois interests, while the Leninist faction sees such democratic procedures as perhaps the best short term tactical means of gaining some advantage for their socialist constituency. The reality of working within broad-based alliance politics makes for a 'blurring' of the sort of ideal patterns proposed by Frost. There are no absolutes when trying to create a counter-hegemony.

Secondly, politics is more than approaches or ideals; it is ideals *in interaction with* real conditions. As Gramsci, for example, reminds us, the operation of hegemonies (and, by extension, counter-hegemonies) requires the intersection of ideas *and coercion*. In contemporary South Africa massive state repression is

a particularly significant factor which seriously affects the use or otherwise of particular political approaches. Although Frost does acknowledge this (Frost, 1988: 21), he does not accord it sufficient importance, and instead falls back on the notion that one 'chooses' to be a Leninist as a 'preference'. I would rather argue that when democrats are faced with the sort of repression as in South Africa, then in a very real sense, they are compelled to adopt Leninist tactics[3], and put 'democracy' on the back-burner as it were. The only alternative to this would be to concede defeat. (This would in no way further a democratic political culture since it would in effect be conceding the upper hand to an undemocratic regime which bases its rule to a large extent on police state tactics.)

In this regard a parallel can certainly be drawn between contemporary South Africa and pre-1917 Tsarist Russia: in both cases, any attempt to organize democratic opposition is or was smashed by the security police: open democratic opposition can be easily infiltrated by agents provocateurs and spies. Because the state can use political openness to undermine the development of democratic opposition, the result is often an argument from some (whom Frost chooses to call 'Leninists') in favour of the adoption of closed clandestine organizational methods. To reduce the emergence of this 'Leninism' to the notion that some leftist individuals *choose 'subjectively'* to adopt this approach ignores the real political complexities that those in the counter-hegemony have to deal with: it is not a case of choosing Leninism as an ideal, but rather is a case of searching for a method that may be effective when confronting a state characterized by a far-rightest[4] government. If the line of argument is accepted that Leninism is as much the result of security police action as it is of leftist 'choice', to argue against the adoption of such realistic tactics/strategies could well be seen to imply an 'acceptance' of the de facto maintenance of the existing rightest (and increasingly totalitarian) state. Further, to argue that the 'Leninist' approach 'will inevitably lead to a political culture even more authoritarian than the present one' (Frost, 1988: 15) reveals much about the social position of the author (i.e. part of the enfranchised minority): it is a position that someone from the suppressed (politically and economically) majority might find hard to accept. More importantly this sort of statement reveals two assumptions which underpin the author's argument: that the 'masses' are 'passive'; and that Leninists will automatically be in a positon to manipulate these passive 'masses'. These assumptions can only hold if the nature of the counter-hegemonic *alliance* politics is not taken into account. In this regard Frost simply ignores the examples of the Leftist Popular Unity governments in Chile (1970–1973), and contemporary Nicaragua, where (a) Leninists formed but *one* part of a ruling alliance, and

did not attempt to undermine the working alliance, and (b) governments which incorporated a significant Leninist influence were *more* democratic than the right wing authoritarian governments which ordinarily characterize Latin American politics. Furthermore, in the South African context Frost interestingly ignores the National Party government's refusal to negotiate with the counter-hegemony, or to negotiate over the issue of one person one vote in a unitary state. If ever there was a Polanian 'end to politics' and an authoritarian attitude toward politics then it must surely be this. Hence Frost's 'less authoritarian' notion (quoted above) becomes a little strained even in terms of his Weberian-Polanian frame of reference.

Frost plays down the influence on the counter-hegemony builders of working within a rightest state which is quite prepared to use an extensive security police system, combined with massive state violence — driven by the so-called Counter-Insurgency Operations (COIN-OPS) strategy in South Africa (See McCuen, 1966) — to crush all opposition (including democrats). Multiple examples could be cited in the South African context; to give but one, the community newspaper *Grassroots* in Cape Town explicitly organized itself so as to complement the Solidarity-type politics of the UDF in early 1980. All the community organizations in the Western Cape were represented on the General Body committee controlling the production of this newspaper, and democratic procedures were rigorously adhered to. However, by utilizing this democratic openness the state has, in the period 1985–1987, smashed the democratic structures underpinning the original project. *Grassroots* can perforce no longer use the same open democratic methods. At the same time those still running the project are aware of the difficulty of developing democracy in a situation where the right-wing repression of the counter-hegemony exists[5]. In such situations the use of 'labels' and zero-sum categories obscures, rather than illuminates the situation.

If Frost was, in part, addressing 'a warning' to the 'democrats' within the counter-hegemony then the above flaws alone will tend to blunt the reception of his (not unimportant) message. To argue against what Frost chooses to term the 'Leninist approach' will simply fall on deaf ears if it means the counter-hegemony will thereby have to de facto concede defeat to the rightest state. If his concern is for the creation of a democratic ethos in South Africa then perhaps the emphasis in the argument should have been different. To reify the democratic *ideal* into an absolute may ultimately damage such an 'ideal'. If democratic organization is unworkable for the counter-hegemony in the short- to medium term — i.e. while the Right have an effective security police system in place — then to insist on it as an 'absolute' will not serve to

promote the idea of a democratic political culture amongst those who actually face daily state harassment at best, and repression at worst. Rather there is a need for political realism.

One way to develop a democratic ethos amongst those in the counter-hegemony would seem to be to encourage the strengthening of the wide alliance, ranging from left-liberals through to Leninists. Learning to make such an alliance work would seem to be the most effective way of learning how to operate a democratic system of compromise and give and take. A second is to recognize that the counter-hegemony will, of necessity, seek to adopt strategies that *work*, and that these may fall into Frost's category of 'Leninist'. However, instead of seeing this as *necessarily* ultimately producing an undemocratic political culture, it might be more useful to assume that those in the counter-hegemony *are* able to differentiate between short-, medium- and long-term aims. Hence their using of a Leninist (vanguard-clandestine) approach in the short- to medium-term may be compatible with the long-term creation of a democratic South Africa *as long as* those in the counter-hegemony *remember where they want to go* (i.e. towards a democratic non-racial socio-political order). It is, in fact, Frost's refusal to separate a 'counter-hegemony' phase from the era when such a counter-hegemony succeeds in transforming itself into the 'ruling hegemony' which so weakens his argument. Hence to equate, as Frost does, a Solidarity-type *counter*-hegemony strategy (i.e. a multiplicity of groups in a loose popular alliance, which makes any state attempt to crush the opposition more difficult) with a *ruling* hegemony mode of organization (i.e. Weberian democracy) is to conflate two different things. One cannot simply collapse 'pre' and 'post revolutionary' situations into one: the two types of political practice will be entirely different in each of these 'phases'. Solidarity-type politics, whether employed in South Africa or Poland, is not necessarily employed — as Frost appears to believe — as a matter of principle. Rather it is employed because, at a specific historical material juncture, it provides those in the counter-hegemony with a useful and/or workable strategy for confronting the ruling hegemony they oppose. At another historical material juncture the employment of 'Leninist' method may prove more useful. And, this is not to say that those very same 'Leninists' will necessarily want to use Leninist methods after they successfully constitute the ruling hegemony. The real problem with the Leninist approach is thus not the approach *per se*; rather it is the danger of inertia: those in the counter-hegemony may get used to behaving in a clandestine and vanguardist way, which means that the approach suitable for the counter-hegemony era is carried over into the era when they constitute the ruling hegemony, and no

longer really need to use such methods. However, there is no need to mobilize, from outside the counter-hegemony, a reified Weberian 'ideal' (of democracy) as a counter-weight to the supposed problem of a reified Leninism because the issue of 'popular democracy' and its relationship to vanguardist politics is not (as Frost seems to think) an unknown concern to those inside the counter-hegemony.

Frost's other concern is that South African Leninists want to 'smash the state'. His counter-argument is that what is rather needed is a reform of Parliament, and Parliamentary control of an efficient bureaucracy.

It is not up to the Leninists or anyone else in the counter-hegemony to reform Parliament. Reform of this nature is something that can only come from the side of the ruling hegemony, and to date they have shown little willingness to reform, either in the direction of a democratic (one person one vote) system in a unitary state, or away from a political system organized in terms of racist premises. To argue in the face of this conservative state intransigence that those in the counter-hegemony should desist from considering a strategy of 'smashing' the state — on the basis that it violates a reified Weberian ideal — is to step outside the bounds of realistic politics. Further, an assumption underlying Frost's article is that the Leninists within the counter-hegemony are *necessarily* opposed to working within a parliamentary-type political milieu. As already demonstrated above, this does not seem to be the case with South African Leninists. South African Leninists are *already* operating within a political bargaining/compromise milieu when they work within the existing counter-hegemony (within which they are not a majority). The existing counter-hegemonic structures (internally as well as externally) precisely constitute a proto-parliament for a post-apartheid South Africa, while the 'formal' Parliament in Cape Town precisely represents a collectivity of those in South Africa who are *not* prepared to operate a democratic system incorporating all South Africans. Why call for a reform of such an undemocratic Parliament while a 'parallel' democratic proto-parliament is in any case in the process of construction?

Frost's ideal of Parliamentary control of an efficient bureaucracy ignores a number of specifically South African problematics in the achievement of such an ideal. Certainly, it would be one of the aims of South African Leninists to build up an efficient bureaucracy: socialism per definition aims for state control of the country's major industries. This necessarily requires an efficient bureaucracy to manage such a socialist economy. It is thus not only Weberians who want an efficient bureaucracy. It is ironic that it is not the South African Leninists, but rather the ruling National

Party — and the Parliament which Frost wants to reform — which seems likely to do the most short- to medium-term damage to the existing bureaucratic machinery because of (a) its adoption of selective Thatcherism,[6] which is likely to disrupt severely South Africa's existing bureaucracy, and even completely eliminate certain 'unprofitable' welfare functions; and (b) its transfer of such sizeable percentages of the country's resources into the military/police/judicial/prison arms of state to the impoverishment of the other state sectors.

It is at least conceivable that the only way to build a democratic South Africa may be to end this current national-socialist bureaucracy and its system of patronage. Building democracy in South Africa may necessarily entail a 'disruption' of such structures. (The term 'smash' seems too extreme.) One simply cannot ignore that those staffing this very bureaucracy have a vested interest in the existing racist and anti-democratic state. It is they who represent a major part of the National Party's constituency; and they who consequently constitute such a major conservative and anti-democratic force in South Africa. To argue that this bureaucracy — dominated as it is by a national-socialist/white racist ideology —will simply accept the control of a democratic Parliament (either a reformed Cape Town Parliament or a formalization of the current counter-hegemonic proto-parliament) is to apply a reified Weberian model which ignores the South African reality. Reform built along Weberian lines may simply not be *possible* in South Africa. For this reason, if those in the counter-hegemony turn to notions of 'smashing the state', it is not because of an inherent 'belief' (a sort of normative choice). (Those who would choose a 'smashing' policy would in fact be termed 'infantile leftists' by Leninists.) Rather, opting for a 'smashing' approach is more likely to be the outcome of frustration: the outcome of realising that there is no other way of creating a non-racial democracy. Frost offers no basis for his assumption that 'smashing' the existing state is *necessarily* incompatible with the building of a future democracy. Certainly a civil war, directed on both sides by secretive, clandestine command structures (i.e. the National Security Management System in Pretoria versus the ANC's Umkonto we Sizwe) will not help to build a democratic political culture; however, there is no *necessary* correlation between a civil war, and political violence, and an undemocratic post war scenario. (For example, the outcome of the American civil war was a Weberian-type democracy.)

Frost also objects to the call for more 'unity' within the counter-hegemony, seeing this as a move toward 'Leninist' vanguardism. There is, of course, an element of truth in this. However, again Frost does not link this call to the actual conditions being faced by

those within the counter-hegemony. The UDF operated from its inception in 1983 as a loose alliance of committees, each of which mobilized its membership around local 'civic' issues like rents, rates, education and public transport (See Grest and Hughes, 1984). This alliance was held together by a network of communication rather than by formalized central leadership. This allowed for maximum local autonomy which improved the UDF's capacity to react to local issues, while the communication network allowed for 'national' debate and 'policy formulation' to take place. (It also, as Frost correctly notes, helped to generate a significant South African democratic political culture.) Frost's call, in 1988, to resist the 'Leninist's' undermining of this loose democratic structure ignores the fact that the real attack on this democratic structure comes not from the Leninists but from the rightest state. The implementation of the States of Emergency have all but destroyed the effective functioning of the democratic communication network, and seriously weakened the local committees themselves. For the counter-hegemony to ignore this is to allow the UDF affiliates to drift apart, which will transform the counter-hegemony from an alliance into an anarchy. This will tend to produce atrophy in each of the component parts over a period of time. It is this state of affairs — i.e. a *real threat* to the democratic movement — which has resulted in calls being heard for (a) a mechanism to be sought to re-establish unity (not necessarily in the old form); and (b) a strategy to match the state's strategy: i.e. if the state is trying to smash the democratic movement, then some of those in the democratic movement presumably believe they are justified in seeking a means to reciprocate.

In conditions which currently exist in South Africa — where searching for ways to counter state repression has to become a central concern of those in the counter-hegemony — a reified ideal of 'democracy' (Weberian or otherwise) becomes, in effect, meaningless. If we are to create a democratic society in South Africa this will need to be built, not out of abstract theory, but out of practically engaging in a struggle with a set of forces that are hostile to the creation of such democracy.

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NOTES

1. To find a definition which adequately describes the contemporary emerging alliance that characterizes the anti-apartheid movement is indeed problematic precisely because (a) it encompasses such a wide diversity of political opinion, (b) it is not so formalized that all forces opposed to apartheid are formally within a single structure as yet, and (c) the alliance, such as it exists, is in a state of flux — i.e. as the low intensity civil war develops so groups have changed and will continue to change their relationship to the main body of the alliance. (Hence some groups presently formally outside the alliance may yet come to join the alliance.) However, this paper will take as axiomatic the idea that there currently exist two main 'cores' to the anti-apartheid movement, namely, the African National Congress (itself an alliance of forces), and the United Democratic Front — Congress of South African Trade Unions axis. Those within these 'camps' usually refer to themselves as the 'democratic movement' (itself a useful hegemony building tool because it is such an all-encompassing and rhetorically useful term). This paper will 'collapse' this huge 'movement' of yet to be fully formalized groups into the term *counter hegemony*. This term is chosen because (a) it emphasizes its oppositional nature vis-à-vis the rightest hegemony (itself an alliance) which is in power, and (b) it serves to emphasize the idea of a counter alliance which is still in the process of being built. This author sees a joint reading of Gramsci and Poulantzas as offering the best theoretical tool for understanding this process of building hegemony.
2. This 'racial' mobilization by the UDF has been largely necessitated by the 'success' of the National Party's apartheid policies: South Africans are now, by and large, segregated into racial 'group areas'. As a result, trying to work cross-racially tends to become geographically difficult for one thing. Secondly, trying to mobilize around 'community issues' has tended to result in what appears to be 'racial' mobilization because communities are now racially segregated and hence the different (and geographically 'isolated') racial communities the apartheid policies created do now have different local community concerns and problems. These are not strictly 'racial' issues, so much as 'local' issues. However, in contemporary segregated South Africa, 'local' generally becomes 'racial'. Examples of such community-issues related organizations have been the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organization (PEBCO), and the Cape Areas Housing Action Committee (CAHAC). An interesting development, however, occurred when during 1988 the Durban Housing Action Committee (DHAC) succeeded in undoing the 'usual' pattern and linked 'Indian', 'coloured' and 'white' residents together to oppose rent increases.
3. By extension then this paper would argue that if South Africa does end up with an undemocratic political culture even after a one person one vote political system is achieved, rather than blaming the Leninists, the cause might just as easily be sought in the history of the struggle against apartheid: i.e. the minority white-racist government and its security police system might justifiably be 'blamed' for 'tutoring' South Africans in the practices of undemocratic government. To blame Leninism as some 'free-floating idea' simply misses the point of real political practice.
4. 'Far-rightest' seems a fair appraisal of the existing South African government: it is a government dominated by an alliance of conservatives (the core group in the alliance), neo-fascists (albeit a declining group within the alliance) and conservative-liberals or so-called 'verligtes' (a growing group within the alliance). It is a government which bases its policy on racist premises, refuses to allow democratic elections (i.e. refuses to grant the majority of the country's citizens the vote), and which favours armed repression of its opponents rather than negotiation.
5. The example of *Grassroots* is based upon discussions between the author of this paper and members of the Executive Committee of *Grassroots* during 1988. A similar pattern — i.e. the undermining of democratic structures by state repression; and a concern with how to overcome this and reactivate democratic practices — was also in evidence in discussions (during 1988) with workers from *Saamstaan* and *South*.

6. The National Party has adopted selective Thatcherism precisely as an attempt to try and preserve for as long as possible its own constituency's economic interests after it loses power to the current counter hegemony: i.e. the National Party used the state bureaucracy to build up its own patronage system, and to transfer wealth into the hands of its own constituency. Now in danger of losing control of that system, the National Party has decided to 'privatize' and so (a) subvert the speedy implementation of any socialist policies by a new government; (b) prevent any new government from using these structures — in the way they did — as a patronage base; and (c) protect their own (primarily white Afrikaner) constituency's economic interests by placing them outside the immediate control of any future government, at least in the short term after a transfer of power.

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