POSTMODERNISM - SOUTH AFRICA'S "THIRD FORCE" - SUBVERTING THE DOMINANT POWER EQUATIONS [1]

John Bottomley
(Department of History, University of North West)

Overall, postmodern philosophy is to be defined as an updated version of scepticism, more concerned with destabilizing other theories and their pretensions to truth than setting up a positive theory of its own; although of course to be sceptical of the theoretical claims of others is to have a definite programme of one's own, if only by default. Postmodern philosophy, therefore, can be seen as a deployment of philosophy to undermine the authoritarian imperatives in our culture, both at the theoretical and the political level. [2]

Postmodernism is essentially subversive in form and anarchic in its cultural spirit. It dramatises its lack of faith in art even as it produces new works of art intended to hasten both cultural and artistic dissolution.

Ihab Hassan [3]

Viola: They that dally nicely with words may quickly make them wanton.
Clown: But indeed words are very rascals since bonds disgraced them.
Viola: Thy reason man?
Clown: Troth, Sir, I can yield you none without words, and words are grown so false I am loath to prove reason with them

Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, 3.1.15-20

Lovell draws up a pretty conclusive balance sheet as to the contemporary standing of Marxism in British intellectual life. "Today, it is extremely difficult to found one's scholarship and research in Marxism"; "postmodernism and poststructuralism... between them have swept the intellectual board in the

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[1] Charles Jencks, "Postmodernism - The Third Force", preface in Charles Jencks (ed.), *The Post-Modern reader* (1992).

[2] Stuart Sim, "Postmodernism and philosophy", in Stuart Sim (ed.), *The Icon dictionary of Postmodern thought* (1998), p. 13.

[3] Ihab Hassan, "POSTmodernISM: A paracritical biography", in *Paracriticisms: Seven speculations of the times* (1975), Chapter 2.

late twentieth century"; Marxism has been displaced on the shelves and reading lists, by the successor theories.[4]

In the previous edition of *New Contree* I wrote that I was on sabbatical until July 1999, and that Tim Clynick would be the interim editor. However, Tim has left academia. We wish this skilled craftsman every success with his new vocation.

Four new members have been co-opted onto our editorial board and make their appearance in this edition of *New Contree*. As one of our foremost authors in both Afrikaans and English, Etienne van Heerden is an obvious choice to promote the work of this journal. Etienne van Heerden is also one of the leading figures in postmodernist thought in South Africa and has written *Postmoderisme en prosa; Vertelstrategieë in vyf verhale van Abraham H. de Vries* (1997). This book was reviewed by Johann Tempelhoff in vol. 42 of *New Contree*. Etienne's position on postmoderism is perhaps most cogently expressed in the preface to *Ancestral voices* (1989):

'It is of course true that there are many similarities *ex analogia* between the testimony and that to which the testimony refers; but then life itself, and death as well of course, is really a fable endlessly repeated...' Judge Lucius, addressing the Cape Bar Council.

Those historians who are interested in the work of Etienne van Heerden can read *LitNet*, Etienne's website at WWW.24.Com under Books and Music.

John Laband is an editor of the *South African Historical Journal* and author most recently of *The rise and fall of the Zulu Nation(1997)* and *The war correspondents: The Anglo-Zulu War* (1996) with I. Knight. John's wide-ranging interests and humour will add much to our efforts to produce a lively journal.

Jon Lewis is author of the oft-quoted *Industrialization and trade union organization in South Africa, 1924-55*. Another one-time colleague in the History Department at the University of the North West, Jon rose to the position of Academic Planner. Now Jon works for SADTU - the teacher's union, and we hope to apply his expertise to the journal.

Johann Tempelhoff is editor of *Historia* and has long been a friend of *New Contree*, and both journals have benefited from a close association. In this sense, appointing Johan onto the editorial board merely serves to formalize the strong ties between us.

This volume contains an essay by David Brooks, the Australian postmodernist whose work includes a compilation of poetry, *The Cold Front* (1983), and two collections of short

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[4]   Colin Bundy "Sharing the burden? A response to Terry Lovell", in Brenda Cooper and Andrew Steyn (eds.), *Transgressing boundaries. New directions in the study of culture in Africa* (1996), p. 33.

stories, *The Book of Sei* (1986) and *Sheep and the Diva* (1990). David Brooks has much to say about the infinite permutations of consciousness and representation in language. I urge those historians who reject postmodernism to read "The Book", which is a transcendental and humbling experience. Unfortunately, David Brooks' works are out of print. Thus, the next edition of *New Contree* will contain a further short story - "Du" from *The Book of Sei*. Thereafter, depending upon response, we can perhaps convince David to allow us to publish *The City of Arches*, another of his postmodernist works.

Also in this *New Contree* is a paper by Lizé Kriel, which graphically conveys the essence of postmodernism by demonstrating the significance of inter-cultural awareness. This paper examines two contrasting perspectives on the Malaboch War of 1894. The first perspective is that of N. C. Weidemann, "Die Malaboch-stam en hulle verset teen wet en orde". Written over fifty years ago, in that emotionally intense period immediately after the Second World War, Weidemann's work reveals a predominantly Eurocentric bias and is a clear distortion of events.

The contrasting piece of work is an M..A. thesis by Tlou Makhura entitled "The Bagananwa Polity in the North-Western Transvaal and the South African Republic, c1836-1896". Tlou Makhura makes the statement, that he hopes as a result of his research, to present Hananwa history back to this tribe. Lizé Kriel confronts the falsity of this logic by emphasizing its demarcation into 'our history, their history' - and Makhura's determination to impose a Hananwa paradigm on his research.

The character of New South African history will depend on the moral tenor of its historians. The inter-cultural complexity of South African history must be emphasized, along with the dangers of an exclusionist approach; that it is not possible to research siamese twins by examining only one of the babies. The alternative is to consciously produce propaganda, whereby history becomes an politicized period-piece. This was the essence of the historical failure during the Nationalist years and the Marxist decades thereafter.

The Unisa Anglo-Boer-War conference held in October 1998 once again reminded me of how deferential white society was - and still is. The invited guests were Shula Marks and Saul Dubow. This was one of the few occasions I can recall, during our 30 year 'Babylonian Captivity', that Marxists (of whatever degree and persuasion) deigned to attend a non-aligned conference in South Africa. This visit suggests that local circumstances have altered and that there are increasingly few Marxist stalwarts left - and the tendency of this handful to focus on non-contentious and only vaguely exponential issues as the conspiracy politics of the previous government.

I was foolish enough to think that the *maskirovka* - that carefully nurtured atmosphere of secrecy, certainty and invective might have been attenuated amongst the *nomenklatura*.

This was a mistake. The old passionate certainties remain.[5]   There was no cognizance of the damage wrought by 'the dead hand of ideology', or appreciation of Marx as that 'failed god', or vision of Marxism as an 'mass social psychopathology'.[6]

The irony for me, was that the invited guests were partly responsible for the meagre academic interest and generally unfocused papers presented at the conference. A major cause of the lacunae in Anglo-Boer War studies has been the Marxist insistence that war was irrelevant, a non-agenda item, and the refuge of Nationalist ideologues. Instead, the Marxists contend that Lord Milner and his Reconstruction were the important elements in the creation of a capitalist/apartheid state in South Africa.[7]

There were few heresy-hunters in this typical South African atmosphere of deference, despite those whole landscapes of inquiry that presented themselves. Those that showed impiety and challenged the past and its passing, faced a staunch rearguard action, and were contemptuously referred to as eccentrics, or court jesters. Charles Jencks has pointed out that the 'counter-culture jester' is the essence of the postmodern.[8] Shakespeare's clown was his 'corrupter of words' and the most profound social commentator in his plays:
    Viola: This fellow is wise enough to play the fool and to do that well craves
    a kind of wit;
    He must observe their mood on whom he jests,
    the quality of persons and the time;
    and like the haggard, check at every feather
    that comes before his eye. This is a practice,
    as full of labour as a wise man's art.
    For folly that he wisely shows is fit,
    But wise men, folly-fall'n quite taint their wit.[9]

[5] For a recent reiteration of the established Marxist position see Saul Dubow, "Colonial Nationalism. The Milner Kindergarten and the rise of 'South Africanism', 1902-1910", *History Workshop Journal* (Spring 1997).

[6] Arthur Koestler; and Doris Lessing, *Walking in the shade, Vol. 2 of my autobiography*, 1949-1962 (1998), p. 175.

[7]   See for instance, A. Atmore and S. Marks, "The Imperial factor in South Africa in the nineteenth century: Towards a reassessment", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 3, 1 (1974); and S. Marks and S. Trapido, "Lord Milner and the South African State", *History Workshop Journal*, 8 (1979). See my paper entitled "'Almost bled to death': The effects of the Anglo-Boer War on societal transformation in the Orange River Colony" in *Historia* (forthcoming) which seeks to expose the extreme monocausality of the revisionist approach to the Anglo-Boer War.

[8]   Charles Jencks, "The Post-Modern-Agenda", in Jencks, *Post-Modern reader*, p. 10.

[9]   *Twelfth Night*, 3.1.36 and 3.1.69.

Everyone is waiting to see whether our vestigial Marxists will once again succeed in transmogrifying themselves, and add to those 'fifty-seven varieties of Marxism, and this even when it is not recognized as Marxism'.[10]

Brenda Cooper insists that a 'newborn Marxism' must prevail because of the confrontational stance and emancipatory impact of this ideology on countries that have suffered various forms of Imperialism:
> and also the racism which accompanied this Imperialism as a weapon of enslavement. In this situation the war of combat against the cultural hegemony of the First World continues not only to dominate the literary strategies, images, languages and forms of Third World intellectuals, who are not white...[11]

Colin Bundy has also called for a virulent defence of the totalising powers of Marxist analysis, especially against post-modernism which he demonises almost Hoover-like, as having 'accommodated itself most comfortably within the revivalist right-wing ethos of the 1980s'.

Bundy is proud of the confrontationist efforts of Marxists to initiate social engineering in Africa:
> There can be little dispute over the contribution of Marxist scholarship to our understanding of Africa over the past thirty years. The radical paradigm in which much African social science was conducted forefronted "discussions of inequality, conflict, social class and unequal development of the world". Marxism, more successfully than any other approach, has since the 1960s traced the terms on which Africa was inserted into a capitalist world system; "the contentious organisation and struggles of labour, in grand design and in everyday life", and "the integration of politics and consciousness into understandings of peasants as agents of history"[12]

Whilst advancing this Marxist hagiography, however, Bundy is forced to acknowledge the real-world conditions in Africa, as opposed to his ivory tower blandishments:
> Life for millions of its inhabitants is becoming harsher, more violent, less secure. During the second half of the 1980s per capital income fell, the number of people in employment declined and government expenditure shrank. Real wages in Africa declined by an average of 30 per cent in the

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[10] Lessing, *Walking in the shade*, p. 316.

[11] Brenda Cooper, "Cultural identity, cultural studies in Africa and the representation of the Middle Passage" in Cooper and Steyn, *Transgressing boundaries*, p. 180.

[12] Bundy, "Sharing the burden?", p.37.

(because they are afraid to love[15]

If there is one story-line that runs through the various figures and stratagems briefly passed in review, it is that this has been by no means an innocent endeavour.

Jonathan Z. Smith[16]

In 1990, Eastern Europe was exposed to global scrutiny for the first time in forty years. The poverty and ruin revealed there, were more indicative of Africa and the Third World, than the First - to the palpable dismay of internationalists. The theory of command and control economies ensuring the equal distribution of profits was immediately assigned to the trashcan of history.

The Marxist interpretation of capitalism also collapsed. Marx believed that capitalism was a confrontational process whereby an affluent few exploited the miserable majority. A product of his own nineteenth century perspective, Marx was unable to predict the growth, a century later, of middle class societies like America. Hence the innumerable varieties of Marxism as the faithful struggled to make a nineteenth century construct applicable to the transformations implicit in another century.

But was Marxist commitment to confrontational politics always the best option? Was this the only weapon that communities could use in overcoming exploitation and prejudice? William Raspberry, one of those who has strenuously opposed affirmative action programmes in America, suggests otherwise:

There is another minority whose situation may be more instructive. I refer to Asian-Americans. Neither the newly arrived southeast Asians nor the earlier-arriving Japanese-Americans, Chinese-Americans and Korean-Americans are loved by the white people. But these groups have spent little time and energy proving that white people don't love them.

While our myth is that racism accounts for our shortcomings. Their belief is that their own efforts can make the difference. No matter what white people think.[17]

Lenin contributed to the ideology of dialectical materialism by arguing that the affluence of the northern hemisphere was the fruit of a rapacious imperialism, and poorer countries

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[15]   George J. Firmage (ed.), *E. E. Cummings, Complete poems 1904-1962* (1994), p. 413.

[16]   Quoted in David Chidester, *Savage systems, colonialism and comparative religion in Southern Africa* (1996), preface.

[17]   James Dale Davidson and William Rees-Mogg, *The Great Reckoning: How the world will change before the year 2000* (1992), p. 313.

were part of a globally exploited and underdeveloped 'proletariat'.[18] The success of Japan in rising to the position of global pre-eminence, and the accomplishments of the other 'Asian Giants' (despite existing hiccups), has no place in this liturgy of European guilt.

Marxist fantasies of exploitation were seductive myths for loser constituencies, who came to see their salvation in terms of redistributionist politics; either through intra-state expropriation, or by leveraged extortion from wealthier parts of the globe.

If Marxism-Leninism, imperialism and dependency are discredited fictions and no longer provide viable explanations for the affluence and poverty within and amongst nations, how are these contrasts to be explained? The answer lies in a new theoretical analysis co-joining culture with economic perspectives of societal growth.

In order to bring this unification about, another dominating Marxist paradigm - Althussar's materialist base and cultural superstructure must also be exposed as an ideological fantasy. The problem lies with a conceptual toolkit that insists that all social and economic activity must be reduced to 'rational utility maximization' - the premise that human beings are actuated solely by self-interest; that they are essentially rational but selfish individuals who always seek to maximize their material well-being.

The global bedrock for Marxists is their unwavering commitment to material determinism (or they would not be Marxists?) - the abstraction of economic actions from the values and beliefs of those performing them, i.e., Marx's utility maximizing 'economic man'.

As a result of this predominating conceptual fallacy, most materialists reject any independent role or hermeneutical/ontological status to such dynamic and yet abstract expressions of social reality as feudalism, clientism, ethnicity, parochialism or nationality - all constituents of 'identity politics'. They deny that ideas, ideologies, cultural values, belief systems or ethnicity have ever been powerful or independent determinants of events.

A growing body of research points to the need to move beyond an object-referential Materialist paradigm, toward a more embracing and self-referential ideal. It argues that the crux of the massive task ahead, lies in advancing our knowledge of the cultural determinants of economic development, political modernization and the engineering of state power. The pendulum, therefore, has swung away from a monocausal emphasis on

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[18]   Lawrence E. Harrison, *Who prospers? How cultural values shape economic and political success* (1992), p. 211 .

economic factors, to a broader investigation of those cultural values that either advance or impede progress within and amongst nations.[19]

This is the opinion of Robert Pirsig in his new work *Lila.* Pirsig emphasizes a flawed hermeneutics and the fact that the global *Zeitgeist* - 'that body of theory from which deductions are made, is wrong at some fundamental level':
> The whole field seemed like a highway filled with angry drivers cursing each other and telling each other they didn't know how to drive when the real trouble was the highway itself. The highway had been laid down as the scientific objective study of man in a manner that parallelled the physical sciences. The trouble was that man isn't suited to this kind of scientific objective study. Objects of scientific study are supposed to hold still. They're supposed to follow the laws of cause and effect, over and over again. Man doesn't do this. Not even savages. The result has been theoretical chaos.[20]

Pirsig argues that the existing hermeneutical crisis is the result of the continued reliance of the humanities upon mechanistic empiricism and especially Enlightenment Positivism. The current paradigms are sterile, Pirsig asserts, because they continue to be based on an idea of scientific purity that is crude reductionism.

Pirsig also claims that the Enlightenment archetype is responsible for the flabby moral and cultural relativism and temporizing of values that has allowed Western achievements to be castigated, pilloried - and dismissed in certain circles. For him, this paralysis of moral patterns has arisen because moral and cultural comparisons have been invalidated by the subject-object metaphysics dominating contemporary social thought.[21]

Many in Western societies are still enthralled by the Enlightenment doctrine of scientific disconnection - that all cultures are unique historical patterns which cannot be judged in

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[19] For proponents of a new cultural emphasis, see the work of the following authors amongst others, Harold Bloom, *The Western canon. The book and school of the ages (*1994); John L. Comaroff and Paul C. Stern, *Perspectives on Nationalism and war* (1995); James Dale Davidson and William Rees-Mogg, *The sovereign individual. The coming economic revolution. How to survive and prosper in it* (1997); James Fallows, "A damaged culture", *The Atlantic Monthly* (Nov. 1987), pp. 49-58; F. Fukuyama, *The end of History and the last man* (1992) and *Trust* (1995); Lawrence C. Harrison, *Underdevelopment is a state of mind. The Latin American case (*1985); Mathew Horseman and Andrew Marshall, *After the Nation-State, citizens, tribalisms and the New World disorder (*1940); Donald Inglehart, *Culture shift in advanced industrial society* (1990); Robert Pirsig, *Lila, An inquiry into morals* (1991); Lucien Pye, *Asia power and politics* (1985); Thomas Sowell, *Ethnic America* (1981); and Michael A. Porter, *The competitive advantage of nations* (1990).

[20] Pirsig, *Lila*, p. 69.

[21] Pirsig, *Lila*, p. 357.

terms of their specific values and outlook; thus, according to this conceptualization, inhuman or rogue societies cannot be criticized or condemned in terms of dominant cosmopolitan Western values - this is a sophistic absurdity.

Scientific disconnection is not possible, Pirsig declares, because cultures can only be understood as a network of social patterns of values; our scientific description of nature is always culturally derived. Nature tells us only what our culture predisposes us to hear. The selection of which inorganic patterns to observe is always made on the basis of contemporaneous patterns of social values and we cannot understand other cultures without taking those differences in values into account.

Jean Comaroff has also stressed the delusion of an assumed or imposed multiculturality:
> We do not all swim in the same melting pot. Multiculturalism is a complex and misleading term. For example, courses are taught in Comparative Literature where students read Achebe one week and Rushdie next week, and Coetzee the week after; and their works are laid side by side as if they were all comparable products of the same brave new world. It's a small-world-after-all, in the comforting, Walt Disney sense, and we can easily take it in from our centred vantage point, where cultures are all alike in their differences and their products lie comfortably together like commodities in a supermarket. This kind of multiculturalism ignores the politics and the histories that differentiate people and make for inequalities of wealth, power and representation. Ours might be a global world, but we occupy diverse positions within it. Nor are those differences simply reducible to a cultural common denominator, they are often etched in warfare and blood, in colonial disjunctures and in irreconcilable inequities and values. If we simplify these relations and disjunctures, we allow the text to fly loose from its context, and in consuming it we merely consume a commodity on our own terms, in ways that reinforce our entrenched ethnocentrism. The fact that, in some classrooms, students read Buchi Emecheta, Nadine Gordimer and Jane Austin, without really locating the authors or the circumstances surrounding the production of their novels reinforces the insidious idea: that there are great men and women everywhere and all cultures can ultimately yield the great bourgeois European novel.[22]

David Lazar has added to these intensifying concerns from a sociological perspective. Lazar examined the rationale behind various economic ideologies applied to South Africa. He draws attention to the artificiality of distinctions between economics and 'the rest of our lives'. Lazar points out that real people, as opposed to abstract economic actors, 'hold

[22]   Jean Comaroff, "Late 20th century social science: A conversation", in Cooper and Steyn, *Transgressing boundaries*, pp. 51-52.

particular beliefs and cherish specific values and recognize their continuing interdependence with others, whether in networks or formal organizations' - the point being that economics, culture and society are never autonomous.

Lazar supports the work of Karl Polanyi and argues for the concept of 'embeddedness', believing that it is essential to 'emphasize the embeddedness of economic action, economic institutions and economic ideologies and their associated rationalities in their cultural, normative, political and structural contexts':

> We must treat economic life as 'embedded' in social life; that is , economic action is a form of social action... (thus) the sociological concept of 'embeddedness' is used to explore the limitations of the notion of economic rationality associated with neo-classical economics... In other words, for sociological analysis, economic action is a form of social action, not merely a matter of individuals acting in pursuit of individual interests, and must not be analysed as if it exists in a rarefied realm with its peculiar, autonomous economic form of motivation.[23]

Another work critical of the current hermeneutical consensus is John Comaroff and Paul Stern's, *Perspectives on Nationalism and war* (1995). Comaroff and Stern argue that the hurricane of social forces unleashed by the collapse of the Soviet Union has made a mockery of existing academic constructs, and revealed their absolute inability to account for the politics of difference. All the grand theoretical traditions, for instance, have had an 'almost millennial faith in the inevitable demise of cultural localism'.

Marxists and Liberals alike were confident that collective identities would inevitably disappear. For Marxists of most kinds, the object of scientific socialism was the overthrow of an inequitable capitalism and its replacement with a modern collective consciousness. Discussing the quixotic nature of this scenario, Comaroff and Stern remark that 'classical' Marxism 'never really comprehended the complexities of nationality (or, for that matter race and gender) as the basis of social identity.'[24]

The liberal tradition also embodied an overwhelmingly positivist impulse, arguing that modernization would render all modes of particularist identity obsolete, through social and economic growth. The fact that this has not happened leads Comaroff and Stern to point out that a conceptualization crisis exists throughout the broad field of the humanities, especially with regard to the politics of identity:

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[23] David Lazar, "Competing economic ideologies in South Africa's economic debate", *British Journal of Sociology*, 47, 4 (1966).

[24] John L. Comaroff and Paul C. Stern (eds.), *Perspectives on Nationalism and war* (1995), p. 2.

We are witnessing the reconstruction of many of our dominant social and
political forms - as well as the conceptual apparatus through which we grasp
them - and yet national consciousness and cultural identity are still very
much alive. If anything, the politics of particularism, of local difference within
global uniformity, has been revitalized with (literally) a vengeance.[25]

Comaroff and Stern continue to be confounded by 'the banality of theory - of social
scientific theory that is - as it reduces an escalating world-historical reality to a bloodless
abstraction.'[26]

Francis Fukuyama's work readily fits into this embryonic body of research. Fukuyama
argues for the increased salience of culture in a post-industrial, postmodern order.
Fukuyama is convinced that identity conflicts will come to dominate the social organization
of modern societies.

With the demise of social engineering, serious observers have come to focus on the
constituents of a dynamic and healthy civil society. A thriving civil society, however,
depends on a people's habits, customs and ethics, 'attributes that can be shaped only
indirectly through conscious political action and must otherwise be nourished through an
increased awareness and respect for culture.'

Fukuyama insists on a return to the pre-Marxist iconoclasm of Hegel, as well as the work
of Weber who stood Marx on his head by insisting that it was not the underlying economic
forces that created cultural products like religion and ideology, but rather culture that
produced certain forms of economic behaviour.

If Weber was correct, Fukuyama argues, then it is essential that we isolate and understand
the nature, culture, morality, political institutions and historical circumstances of those civil
societies that have engendered prosperity.

The problem, Fukuyama believes, is that Americans have been ill-served by contemporary
economic debates, and existing behavioural models, that have failed to recognize the
importance of cultural factors and social capital in the creation of a successful civil society.
Like Pirsig and the Comaroffs, Fukuyama points to the hermeneutical fallacy of an
imposed cultural relativity:

> The purpose of multicultural curricula in American classrooms today is not
> to confront and understand cultural differences squarely, if that were all
> there was to it, no one could possibly object to this kind of broadening of

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[25] Comaroff and Stern, *Nationalism and war*, p. 3.

[26] Comaroff and Stern, *Nationalism and war*, Chapter 10, "Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Politics
of Difference in an Age of Revolution", p. 244.

horizons.   The problem with multiculturalism as it is practiced in the
American system is that its underlying objective is not to understand but to
validate the non-western cultures of America's various ethnic and racial
minorities.   Arriving at a positive evaluation of these cultures is far more
important than being accurate about them.   In some cases, the underlying
message is an ecumenical but false one that all cultures ultimately uphold
the same decent, liberal values as the writers of the multicultural curriculum
itself.[27]

Fukuyama believes that the insularity of American society and its lack of global
competitiveness, the result of America's decades-long position as the foremost industrial
power(a position she has now lost to Japan), is responsible for this lack of cultural
inquisitiveness:
The more one is familiar with different cultures, the more one understands
that they are not all created equal.   An honest multiculturalism would
recognize that some cultural traits are not helpful in the sustenance of a
healthy democratic political system and economy.   This should not be the
grounds for barring certain peoples with cultures deemed unacceptable but,
rather, grounds for the assertion of positive aspects of American culture like
the work ethic, sociability and citizenship as immigrants move through the
education system.[28]
Fukuyama concludes that as long as culture is rejected as a determinant of global
success, our understanding of human development will be severely handicapped.

Cultural incompatibility and the New South Africa - 'Gotham City without Batman'
Without justice what is government but a great robbery?

St. Augustine[29]

Governments are the quintessential protection rackets with the advantage
of legitimacy.

Charles Tilly[30]

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[27]   Fukuyama, *Trust*, p. 319.

[28]   Fukuyama, *Trust*, p. 319.

[29]   Quoted in Frederic C. Lane, "Economic consequences of organized violence", *The Journal of Economic History*, 18, 4 (December 1958).

[30]   Charles Tilly, *Coercion, capital and European states, AD990-1990* (1990), p. 343.

If the postcolonial nation-state had become a shackle on progress, as more and more critics in Africa seemed to agree by the end of the 1980s, the prime reason could appear in little doubt. The state was not liberating and protective of its citizens, no matter what its propaganda claimed; on the contrary, its gross effect was constricting and exploitative, or else, it simply failed to operate in any social sense at all.

Basil Davidson[31]

'Honesty in the New South Africa is merely the fear of getting caught'
Bumper sticker

Marxism identified conflict and contradiction as its historical engine in South Africa:
between forces and relations of production; between the classes that were its precipitates. What Marxism facilitated was the analysis of concrete historical social formations in a manner that would guide political intervention to hasten and aid the transition to socialism[32]

In their search for the mainsprings of revolution, it was Marxist historians who turned history into a weapon, and it was their determinist *Leitmotif* that helped legitimize and rationalize and underpin the emerging order in South Africa. Theirs was the typical monocausal world of exploitation and victimization, and it is this perspective that has been used to justify the logic of extortion, and is at least partly responsible for turning this country into 'a living hell'.

Exposed to a propaganda of envy, the response of many has been to attack the foundations of civil society. The New South Africa has emerged as a perverse environment of redistributionist coalitions and racial scapegoats; a country in which many politicians cater for constituencies who demand something for nothing, and gangsters rape and pillage with impunity. And all of these extractive strategies (including crime) masquerade behind pretensions to social democracy.

In many ways the Marxists have been the guardians of conventional thinking in South Africa. In view of the collapse of this ideology, however, it is necessary to consider whether South Africa will benefit by continuing to apply those combative and counterproductive habits of mind engendered by this ideology during and after the apartheid war.

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[31]   Basil Davidson quoted in Dale-Davidson and Rees-Mogg, *Sovereign Individual*, p. 218.

[32]   Terry Lovell, "The burden of the disciplines: African studies, women's studies, cultural studies", in Cooper and Steyn, *Transgressing boundaries*, pp. 26-27.

It is also necessary to contemplate the type of society the majority of South Africans would want for the future. There can surely be no doubt that the culture of survival in the New South Africa is the universal, cosmopolitan, capitalist culture. The ruins of Soviet Europe have little to offer this country - and the rest of Africa is swarming over our borders in an effort to find those jobs only capitalism has been able to provide on this rimland continent on the margins of subsistence.

The New South Africa can either continue with De Tocqueville's 'tyranny of the majority' holding onto grievances, seeking redistribution, and thereby hastening the emergence of illiberal doctrines out of past societal injustices - or we can seek a viable and stable formula for the future

The regeneration of civil society must be the priority, but we are burdened with a 'high-cost', 'low-trust' and increasingly coercive government. This is a government that has stubbornly rejected imperatives to economic rationality in the face of pressures from tax-consuming and party-supporting elements of the electorate; a government that is bankrupt of those decisive ideas capable of sustaining political cohesion and legitimating its authority.

The most damaging aspect of governmental failure, has been the loss of social capital - that common purpose which Emile Durkheim referred to as 'organic solidarity'.[33]   We desperately need a programme of positive cultural awareness, that will inculcate such values as self-respect, self-reliance and cultural interdependence and move the population away from revolutionary propaganda and those ideologies of exploitation and entitlement which no government, especially one in Africa, can fulfil.

The problem lies in determining positive cultural values. We have already examined the opinion of academics who are convinced that the existing hermeneutical commitment to cultural relativity and an 'unexamined' multiculturalism has subverted any possibility of understanding cultural differentiation. There is, therefore, little incentive to engage in research dealing with cultural criteria or evaluation. We get some idea of the ignorance surrounding identity politics in the work of Jean Comaroff:

> One issue that anthropology has faced of late, for instance, has been the need to move not only into history, but away from small, peripheral, isolated societies. Increasingly, in Chicago, our students which to study their own world. They want to work in America or Europe, and are doing so for a variety of reasons - some pragmatic, some in response to the critique that anthropology has fetishised others. This, in turn, has presented new possibilities and necessities. Suddenly, anthropologists are studying the state, "guest workers", ethnicity, diaspora cultures. And they do not have a

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[33] Emile Durkheim, *The division of labour in society* (1933).

clue how to set about it. How do you extend a face-to-face empirical
method, derived from "participant observation", to a global canvas, without
a loss of depth or explanatory possibility.[34]

One of the few academic works published in the New South Africa which broaches this
tainted and profane topic is a recent paper by Marinel Gerritsen, of the Department of
Applied Linguistics at the university of Nijmegen. Marinel's paper is entitled, 'The Role Of
Culture In Communications: How knowledge of differences in communication between
cultures may be the key to successful cross-cultural communication'.[35]

Culture is defined as 'the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the
members of one group or category of people from another', whilst culture includes all the
activities that groups of human beings have in common and have absorbed from previous
generations.

The communications problem arises when different cultures espouse and/or cherish very
different values. Gerritsen finds the work of Geert Hofstede most useful in terms of
Holstede's ability to differentiate between the essential and often contradictory elements
of cultures

Hofstede puts forward five critical cultural indices. The first is the Power Distance (PDI)
This is the extent to which less powerful members of society are able to accept that power
is distributed unequally. Members of cultures with a high power index such as Malaysia,
Guatemala, Arabic Countries, India, and West Africa show respect and are less critical of
those in power. Low power index countries will not tolerate unjust social structures and
will confront those who hold power without earning it.

The second cultural indice is Individualism (IDV) - those aspects that create what
Fukuyama has referred to as either 'high-trust' or 'low-trust' societies. In cultures that
praise individualism, people look to themselves and their immediate family. It is their own
values that dictate their actions - and all other influences are treated as extraneous. In
high collectivism societies in contrast, such as Guatemala, Equador, Indonesia, Pakistan
and Columbia, group decisions are considered to be better than individual decisions.
Individuals, therefore, see themselves as speaking on behalf of the group and not on
behalf of themselves. Family, clan members, workmates, school mates are essential to
the self-worth and aspirational values in this type of culture.

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[34]   Comaroff, "Late 20th century social science", p. 43.

[35]   Marinel Gerritsen, "The role of culture in communication: How knowledge of differences in
communication between cultures may be the key to successful intercultural communication", *South
African Journal of Linguistics*, Supplement 35 (September 1998).

The third contrasting cultural indice is the masculinity index (Mas). In masculine-dominated societies, there is a strict division of roles between male/female functions. Masculine cultures (for example Japan, Italy, Great-Britain, USA, Greece and South Africa) are assertive, boasting is normal and so is public praise. In masculine societies one openly crosses swords with colleagues in meetings in order to show ones's intelligence and desire to win. Feminine cultures in contrast (for example, Denmark, the Netherlands), social integration, co-joint cooperation and achievement, and consensus are praised. A feminine society is a society in which one likes compromises. Masculine societies are more stark and have sympathy for the hero and disdain for the loser. Feminine societies are more people orientated (one works in order to live), whilst masculine societies are more achievement and object-orientated societies (one lives in order to work).

The fourth Hofstede indice is Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) - the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid such situations:
> Cultures with a high uncertainty avoidance index such as Greece, Portugal, Belgium, France, Spain, Argentine, Chile, Yugoslavia, are afraid of people and things that they don't know well(other persons, other groups, innovations). They want to be on the safe side and want to have many laws and rules in order to get a grip on life. For example those cultures mostly have an elaborated legal system and a religion that offers certainty about aspects we do not have a grip on, like what will happen after death. They have organizational structures that clearly show who is responsible for what and how to act, managers have answers to all questions that employers may raise about their work. Contracts are worked out well and nothing is left to chance. Whereas accuracy is a great virtue in cultures with a high a low uncertainty avoidance (for example Denmark, Sweden, Great-Britain).[36]

Finally, Long-Term Orientation or Confucian Dynamism (CDI) - the extent to which a society exhibits a pragmatic future-orientated perspective rather than a conventional historic or short-term point of view. In cultures with a high Confucian dynamism (for example China, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea) people are willing to subordinate themselves for a purpose far into the future. The population perseveres despite slow results, and people show respect for social and status obligations.

Conclusion: 'The slaves of some defunct economist'
> In the past, White South Africans adopted the 'Titanic position' when dealing with changes that threatened to overwhelm them - they played at rearranging the deckchairs. Now they've sunk to extolling the stoically defeatist 'Helderberg position' - the difference in the two positions is one of

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[36] Gerritsen, "Role of culture".

expectation - some passengers survived the Titanic disaster - whereas there were no survivors in the Helderberg air disaster.

Have you noticed how inexpressible is the individuality of one man, how difficult it is to know distinctly what distinguishes him, how he feels and lives, how differently his eyes see, his soul measures, his heart experiences, everything? What depth there is in the character of a single people which, even after repeated and probing observation, manages to evade the world that would capture it and render it recognizable enough for general comprehension and empathy. If this is so, how then can one survey an ocean of entire peoples, times and countries, comprehend them in one glance, one sentiment, or one word, a weak, incomplete silhouette of a world? A whole *tableau vivant* of manners, customs, necessities, particularities of earth and heaven must be added to it, or even precede it; you must enter the spirit of a people before you can share even one of its thoughts or deeds. You would indeed have to discover that single word which would contain everything that it is to express; else one simply reads - a word.[37]

The goals any social entity sets itself are not arbitrary but at least partly a product of its general belief-system which, in turn, is based on its structure.[38]

The language took them over'...We should be careful of the company we keep - and the language we use. Regimes, whole countries, have been taken over by language spreading like a virus from the minds whose substance is hatred and envy.[39]

We live in large part by fabrications and fables, lies and myths, a cultural shorthand that all societies acquire to make sense of global complexity. Whole communities devise specific forms of behaviour and mannerisms to deal with their particular circumstances. At the same time it must be emphasised that there is no safety or especial veracity in the vision of majorities - the culture of whole nations has proved to be evil or misguided - during the European Imperial era, for instance, or during the Nazi moment, and to a lesser extent in the apartheid decades in South Africa.

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[37]   Martin van Creveld, *The transformations of war* (1991), p. 149.

[38]   Van Creveld, *Transformations of war*, p. 224.

[39]   Doris Lessing, *Under My Skin, Vol. 1 of my autobiography, to 1949* (1995), p. 276.

There have been many occasions in history when nations have continued along the path of folly despite being aware that their way was false - as Barbara Tuchman has revealed in her work *The march of folly*. To this list must be added the New South Africa.

The existence of two or more cultures within one nation is rather like a marriage - the partners, being joined together, must rely on one another for the success of the enterprise. One partner continuously abusing or assaulting the other, will merely succeed in damaging their co-joint venture - this is folly.

This form of folly, however, is endemic to the New South Africa. The irony is that the New South Africa is the victim of the bankrupt and inappropriate ideas of a now defunct economist - Karl Marx.   John Maynard Keynes asserted that the world is ruled by little other than the ideas of economists and political philosophers:

> 'Practical men', he argued, 'who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence are usually the slaves of some defunct economist.' All political leaders, parties and governments simply carry out, whether they know it or not, theories and ideas which have been dreamed up by intellectuals or academics. The world is ultimately ruled by 'academic scribblers'.[40]

This paper has shown that despite the global collapse of Marxism, this ideology continues to enslave and do grievous damage to the New South Africa, by encouraging the politics of confrontation and those impossible aspirations that bolster the politics of envy. It is futile to engage in redistribution/retribution politics if the whole enterprise is thereby to degenerate into the typical African 'basket-case'.

In a sense the conflict in the New South Africa is the struggle of the Third World against the culture of the First World. To many in the new government, the existing cosmopolitan, capitalist culture is unsavoury - yet this fact does not deter the hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants who are entering South Africa in search of survival.

This world of eyeblink transport needs a new ideology - one that promotes the positive elements of our co-joint cultures.   But before this ideological construct is attempted, perhaps along the lines suggested by Marinel Gerritson, we need to re-establish the legitimacy of an increasingly disputed succession in this country. It is folly to bludgeon the body that offers some hope of salvation.

There must be some commitment on the part of this New South African government to inter-racial, inter-cultural forms of co-operation, and the renunciation of that heresy of Marxist ideology with its societal destructiveness. Those Pol Pot Palookas who continue

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[40]   Quoted in Andrew Heywood, *Political ideologies. An introduction* (1992), p. 3.

to advance ideas of First World citizens gleefully striding into the fields, hoe in hand, to work on community projects, must be silenced - or the First World will vote with its feet and its mind and its money - and leave the New South Africa to its wretched folly.