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The Post-Modernism of the Right and the Need for Constructive Thinking

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Abstract

This paper constructs a genealogy of what I call "postmodern conservatism" and discusses how it has emerged in recent years as a political force. I also discuss how the left can counter these trends through more constructive and concrete proposals moving away from identity politics and talk on values.

Keywords

Postmodernism, Conservatism, Critical Theory

Almost a century and a half ago Friedrich Nietzsche proclaimed that we were moving from a society that believed in truth and morals, to one that adhered to values.ⁱ Individuals, no longer able to articulate why they believed in this moral principle or that one, would gradually come to feel that the mere fact that they believed in a value was sufficient to establish its credibility. He also felt that the advance of liberalism and new media, with the rights to free expression realizing itself in the advancement of a growing plurality of agendas, could only deepen this trend.

This paper is intended as an exploration of these tendencies, and their impact on the broader social culture. It combines aspects of a (selective) intellectual history with some normative and political evaluations. The crux of my argument is that the language of values, as epitomized in postmodern discourses, has become standard in both the intellectual and cultural climate; on the political left, and more noticeably, on the political right. I will claim that this is a deeply disturbing development, both in itself, and for the realization of a left-wing politics. After examining these trends in several sections, I will conclude by arguing that the political left should take what is useful in post-modernism and gradually move to a more constructive approach of social change. This is both because post-modernism has borne limited theoretical results, and because the right has found ways to strategically deploy them in useful ways. Indeed, I will argue that the political right has and will always be more adept at manipulating the post-modern language of values than the left. Left wing thinkers should therefore start to look for other, more constructive theoretical approaches.

Objective Truth, Morals and the Emergence of Post-Modernism

In this section, I will briefly account for the shift from left wing intellectuals believing in the objective truth and morality of their positions to the new, post-modern belief in social identity values that has become widely prevalent.ⁱⁱ Earlier in the 20th century, the left welcomed the emergence of this new post-modern era of values taking

the place of truth. We felt that this ideological shift would open the space for new voices to participate in what were once monopolized civic conversations. Many felt that the belief in universal and timeless truths had led Western states to adeptly and dangerously arrogant policies which they sought to export across the globe through militarism and imperialism. Better by far to drop such hubris and adopt a perspectival stance where each individual's values and feelings were to be their own prerogative. While I agree with this in part, I would like to put pressure on this position. I believe that the shift from objective truth and morals to social identity and values has had many benefits for left-wing movements, but has ultimately run its course and become a liability. Later in this essay, I will explain why in some detail.

This account is intended to be slightly polemical as a way of inciting consideration into the broader history of this transition. Since the Enlightenment and through the 19th century, progressives in Eurocentric cultures almost always associated their movements with the virtues of objective truth, and the morality of greater equality. These were combined in many different ways in various theoretical traditions, sometimes with more success than with others. Revolutionary and romantic thinkers such as Rousseau and Paine stressed the fundamental rights of human beings to live in a situation of equality and freedom. Liberal progressives such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mills drew on the "objective" moral calculus of Utilitarianism to advocate for reform. And of course, dialectical thinkers such as Karl Marx argued that the immanent movement of history would reveal the fundamental lies and contradictions of Capital and lead to the development of a far higher form of society. Each of these thinkers, and the movements they spawned, felt that they had uncovered a basic set of truths, whether about the intrinsic nature of human beings, or about their moral nature. And they acted accordingly, often proposing, and where possible implementing, bold policies to reform society from the ground up. Some of these, such as the initiative to win the vote for women appear quite admirable to posterity. Other, such as the Jacobin revolt and its consequent executions, appear repellent.

In the early 20th century, many on the left still believed in the objective truth and morality of their positions. One can point to the scientific pretensions of the dozens of

Marxist theories and approaches to history and revolution, the theories of the existential self which emerged in French existentialism, and even (though to a lesser extent) the empirically minded gradualism of the American pragmatists. Each of these movements believed themselves to give an objective, or at least scientifically plausible, account of their subject matter. In the more ambitious traditions, this led to a kind of fundamentalism; a rigid belief that one's favored progressive tradition was able to explain subject matters which had been a mystery to all other discourses. Certain strands of Marxism were famously guilty of this over reach.

Each of these left-wing movements crested during the peak of Western dominance. During the early 20th century, Western powers and their ways of thinking dominated the world and silenced all other ways of perceiving and transforming reality. At their worst, as in the case of Stalinism, this imperious confidence warped into a totalitarian drive to dominate all aspects of reality. It is to the discredit of many left-wing movements that, far from pushing against these totalitarian drives, many embraced or at least tolerated them as preferable to the alternative. This decision had far reaching consequences as a new generation of left-wing thinkers emerged who adopted quite a different orientation to their forebears. Many would come to reject the confidence in the objective truth and morality of progressive movements, which had often served as a catalyst for the arrogance and over reach which would eventually be their downfall. This would climax with the emergence of post-modernism in the later part of the century. Post-modernism, as complex a movement as any other, began as a reaction against the belief in objective truth and morality which had long dominated left-wing movements. In a strange irony, the varied strands of post-modern discourse have become the preferred theoretical frameworks for many on the left.

The forerunners of post-modern theory emerged in the 1940s, during an unusual time in the history of European thought. Many Europeans had been deeply horrified by the atrocities perpetuated during the Second World War. More cynically, European intellectuals also reacted staunchly to the growing awareness that both the ideological and concrete influence of the Continent was on the wane. It seemed to many that the promise of Modernism, and Western civilization more generally, had proven a bust.

Some, like Martin Heidegger, looked upon this shift with cautious pessimism.ⁱⁱⁱ Others, such as Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, took it upon themselves to explain how Western reason, and the Enlightenment promises associated with it, could be turned to such violent and seemingly nihilistic ends.^{iv} In so doing, they undertook a novel effort to fuse the Marxist critique of society with psychoanalysis, the newly discovered science of individual psyche.^v

While the work of the Frankfurt school was important in initiating the shift away from modernism and its optimistic rationality, the post-modern conception of agency truly blossomed in France during the 1960s.^{vi} It was initiated by a group of young scholars against the then dominant schools of thought in French intellectual circles. These include: semiotics, Hegelian dialectics (particularly as understood by Alexandre Kojév and Jean Hippolyte), Sartrean existentialism, and (especially for many) Marxism. Each of these became associated with some vestige of the rationalized established discourses, whether it was the historical tyranny of dialectics or the transcendental narcissism of Sartre. Thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, and Jacques Derrida have since become synonymous with the intellectual attempt to undermine not just these discourses, but the very idea that one can ever get beyond discourse and reach an objective philosophical standpoint from which to see the world as it truly is.^{vii} Many came up with insightful and even brilliant accounts for why this realization should help liberate us, particularly by revealing the contingency behind powerful and often institutionally backed discourses. Others came up with important social theories which purported to explain how the discourses of modernity emerged and were propagated across society. Most critically, while these thinkers differed on many important points, all (excepting perhaps Deleuze) stressed that their criticisms were neither objective observations, nor did they rest on some alternative normative theory that should be propagated in place of the discourses they criticized.^{viii} This leads to the question of what type of theoretical approach was being offered.

The term post-modernism, as far as I know, was originated by Lyotard. He characterized post-modernism in historical terms, understanding it as a time period

wherein individuals had lost faith in the "meta-narratives" which traditionally had bridged disciplines and social practices.^{ix} As he puts it in his classic work *The Postmodern Condition*:

"In contemporary society and culture - postindustrial society, postmodern culture - the question of the legitimation of knowledge is formulated in different terms. The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation."^x

Since then, post-modernism has become a catch all term for any number of (mostly) left-wing movements and intellectual positions which share a certain family resemblance with one another. While post-modern theorists differed on a great many of central points, they shared two crucial beliefs in common. The first was that there could be no objective standpoint from which a subject could assess the world. To invoke Richard Rorty, we must become anti-foundationalists.^{xi} And the second related belief was that previous theories of morality and agency, themselves based on those objectivising discourses, were both unsustainable and undesirable. These were explosive claims, though the ramifications of each were of course unpacked differently depending on the thinker in question.

Here I would like to make one final historical point. There is an important difference, especially for the left, between theorists who see post-modernism and its related epistemologies and values as a kind of epoch in human history, and those who see it somewhat paradoxically as a timeless set of techniques and positions.

For those on the left who see post-modernism as an epoch, such as Lyotard, Badiou^{xii}, Virilio, Jameson, Baudrillard, Ferguson, and others, the emergence of post-modern positions is the result of historical changes in social conditions. They see post-modernism as one more epoch in human history where the collapsing belief in grand narratives, objective truth and morals are the consequence of a unique set of social determinants. Many explanations are given for this: the fragmentation effects of technology, the emergence of neo-liberal capitalism, the insidious impact of the culture industry. Some left-wing authors have embraced this epochal shift, others are more critical. But the general orientation of these authors has been to remain skeptical of the

broader metaphysical claims of post-modern theorists. Many of these authors remain stubbornly attached to the idea of objective truth and morality, or at least want us not to abandon it wholesale. As we shall see in the conclusion to this essay, my position can be lumped together with these aforementioned authors, though I will refrain from giving my own (extensive) historical narrative on why the post-modern epoch emerged. I also believe that post-modernism is an epoch generated by social determinants, especially what I call techno capitalism, and that one of the goals of a broadly left-wing project must be to escape its parameters rather than embrace them as many have.

Then there are those on the left who see post-modernism as a set of techniques and positions which were invented or discovered sometime after the Second World War. These authors tend to be more radical in some respects, but in other respects more restrained. They are more radical because they do not see post-modernism as simply another historical discourse emerging due to a unique set of social determinants. Post-modern techniques and positions transcend their historical origins and provide a permanent means of interrogating the world and deconstructing the invalid discourses that surround it. This leads to its more restrained dimensions. Many of these authors believe that post-modernism offers a permanent set of techniques and positions that are either explicitly or implicitly regarded as superior to those which precede them. Important authors in this category include Derrida, Foucault, Spivak and, to some extent and with important qualifications, Richard Rorty. In this respect, post-modern positions and techniques are regarded much like any other shift in the history of Western thought—they are thought superior to those which have come before, and are therefore expected to outlast the more primitive techniques and positions of our ancestors. How to square the seeming paradox of having an eternally valid set of techniques and positions whose orientation is to break down beliefs in eternally valid techniques and positions is something that has taken up a considerable literature of its own. Regardless of this difficulty, most of these authors, and their disciples, believe that post-modernism has definitively settled the question of objective truths and morals in the negative. The goals of the left must therefore be to criticize, and as we shall see, adopt the language of social identity and values.

Move to the Language of Values

The left's embrace of these post-modern positions was essential in the shift from the language of objective truth and morals to the language of values. At the beginning of this essay I invoked Nietzsche's claim to this effect as an important precedent. Not coincidentally, many of the post-modern thinkers just discussed took Nietzsche to be an intellectual ancestor. Foucault^{xiii} was obviously the most noticeable of these, though he also had an immense influence Deleuze and Lyotard especially. In the rest of this section I will explore what it means to enact a post-modern shift to the language of value, and how the left has done so.

The language of values, according to Nietzsche, emerges when the intellectual and spiritual foundations of our moral systems fall apart. According to Nietzsche, for most of the West's history a kind of Christianized Platonism served as the total philosophical framework-the grand narrative to use Lyotard's term-for all of our moral beliefs.^{xiv} This includes all the various iterations and systems of moral thought which emerged, from overt Christian ethics down to vulgar Kantianism. This Christianized Platonism bridged the modern schism between facts and norms by establishing God as the onto-theological source of moral meaning in the universe. However, in the modern world, with the growth of secularism, a problem emerged. God's so called "death"^{xv} at our hands meant that reality and morals became separated, and it was unclear what the source of the latter was. The tools of modern scientific analysis enabled us to gauge some kind of insight into the descriptive nature of the world and even into the human animal. But the problem of what gave life meaning-gave it value-and hence what underpinned our moral beliefs was not so easily solved. It seemed that if there was no onto-theological source for value then we might be confronted with the reality that there simply was no such thing. This was the problem of nihilism.

Of course, much of Nietzsche's constructive work was taken up with how to reinscribe value into a world, and establish a kind of morals beyond conventional morality-beyond good and evil. But he was deeply aware, and concerned, about another possibility. He was deeply distressed that many people, in the absence of an

onto-theological source for their moral beliefs, would choose not to engage in the challenging task of reconstructing a new kind of morals. This would demand too much; it would demand they challenge many of their suppositions about the self, about their victimhood or elite status, and most notably, the values of their civilization. Instead they would continue to hold to conventional morality, but give it a new and more vulgar supporting framework. Rather than appealing to some transcendent God to justify their morality, they would claim that morals were about the promotion of human happiness and/or the preservation of their particular culture.^{xvi} The solution to nihilism became turning one's eye from the heavens to the earth and to one's positive social identity.^{xvii} This is where the language of values comes in. With the absence of a robust philosophical framework, the invocation of values became a way to assert one's social identity and interests and demand they be respected. Questions about whether one's social identity and interests had any moral significance beyond their value to a given person or culture had no meaning in the context of this vulgar supporting framework. The fact that subjects ascribed them value was the only salient issue.

Nietzsche was horrified by this development, largely for elitist reasons. He felt that many of the values individuals attached themselves to, whether they be related to one's individual or social identity, were unworthy of respect. This was largely for aesthetic reasons. Nietzsche preferred individuals who challenged themselves to rise above their own interests and those of their culture; they willed great and terrible things that made them appear God like.^{xviii} Obviously few on the left will want to follow him down this path.^{xix}

However, many have (ironically) followed his reasoning on individual identity and culture providing a new and more realistic framework for the source of "values." With the shift to the post-modern position early in the 20th century, the left acquired powerful new theoretical tools to criticize the presuppositions of both orthodox progressives and the moralizing pretensions of traditional bourgeois Conservatism. Post-modernism enabled many on the left to demonstrate that these presuppositions and pretensions to truth and objectivity made by both conservatives and classical left-wing authors were at best misguided, and at worst, deeply harmful. On the left, criticism was aimed at the

scientific aspirations and economism of traditional Marxism, especially its tendency to ignore the intersectional marginalization of people due to factors like race, gender, and sexual orientation. On the right, traditional beliefs about the naturalness of moral codes, prejudicial laws and legal philosophies, and of course the authority of the so-called canon of knowledge and wisdom were all undermined and destabilized.^{xx}

Much of this was of considerable value, and I do not wish to take issue with these critical efforts. More importantly, I am evaluating them primarily as part of a shift in the history of ideas, and more pertinently, political ideas. I am not looking at the more basic, or if you prefer “foundational,” problems raised by post-modern epistemology, metaphysics, etc.^{xxi} The issues raised in dealing with these problems would be quite different and more abstractly philosophical, but none the less essential in giving a complete evaluation of the shift to post-modernism and its theoretical and practical significance. Here, I am only going to conclude by looking at some of the more practical political and moral consequences of enacting this shift and the related move to values talk.

Once the critical efforts were completed, and the more calcified positions of classical left wisdom destabilized, the next obvious step was to ask what could be enacted in their place? How does one re-evaluate all values in the new world, to invoke the Nietzschean precursor again? But the critical effort had been so thorough, at least on the surface, that it was not clear what positive programme could be put in place of the old modernist projects. Indeed, once one abandoned a belief in objective truth and morality, it wasn't clear that anything should be put in the place of the old Leftist and conservative modernist projects. But this seemed fundamentally nihilistic, and not at all in keeping with the progressive and egalitarian ambitions fundamental to any left-wing position.

This is where the turn to the language of values prophesized by Nietzsche was enacted. The turn to values occurred when members of the left started to take positive identity as the central source of value creation, though often with a more collectivist twist than had been expected by Nietzsche and other critics of nihilistic liberalism. People on the left began to look at the features associated with given collectively held

identities that had long been marginalized-gender, sexual orientation, race. The focus was (rightly) placed on social identities because of the long and deeply tragic Western history of using identity, whether false or real, as a way to classify, discipline, and marginalize.

So far, we have moved up to the critical projects aforementioned. But the crucial step was the next one. Eventually, this focus on identity was given a positive twist and associated with the language of values. The social identity of subjects and the values they would will into the world were seen as prejudicially affronted or illegitimately defined by repressive and/or disciplinary authorities. In some circumstances, this was given an essentialist slant; these social identities had something approach a real essence^{xxii} to them, and an associated set of values. These values needed to be expressed if the lives of the subjects who inhabited these social identities were to be truly fulfilling. Because repressive authorities^{xxiii} held them back, these social identities had never been given a full opportunity to flourish and the values they wished to live by were ignored. In other circumstances the given slant was deliberately anti-essentialist; these social identities were constituted by powerful authorities, and needed to be denied if the identity of subjects was truly to be their own creation independent of power.^{xxiv}

But whether given this essentialist or anti-essentialist slant the locus of left-wing post modernism was the same; the social identities of subjects was the most basic object of theoretical and political examination because these identities were the source of value in the world. Whether the solution was to eliminate repression to allow their genuine flourishing, or undoing the processes through which identities were constituted to enable subjects to will their own independent values, the primary concern was the same. The social identities of marginalized subjects was now the foundation to political efforts, because it was from identity that values sprung.

Values now served where objective truth and morality once stood. This is because, rather than being innate features of the world, or immanent principles to be inevitably realized through a historical process, values came into being through and with the identities of subjects. They were, in a sense, willed into being. Values provided an explanatory framework-albeit a contingent rather than necessary and objective one-

through which one make both descriptive observations and normative evaluations. Of course, the values willed into the world were as different as the identities behind them. This seemed to pose a problem for both the universality and general applicability of any broadly left-wing project; indeed, how could there be a left if different identities led to different values. Some thinkers were more sensitive to this problem than others.^{xxv} But for many, the goal of intellectual activity on the left became interrogating the social identity of subjects, determining what either repressed them or inauthentically constituted them as a collectivity, and breaking down the barriers to expressing the values these identities held to or would hold to once emancipated.

I have a great deal of sympathy and respect for these left-wing projects; especially those which focus on historically marginalized identities. But in the next section, I will highlight that it often moves dangerously close to the Right in some of its positions. This, not coincidentally, has had unintended consequences. Specifically, it means the left has helped engender a kind of post-modernism that has been antithetical to its interests. In the next section, I will suggest that this is because conservatives have capably been able to take advantage of the shift to social identities and the language of values to both undermine left wing project. Moreover, they have taken advantage of the language of values to push for concrete but deeply vulgar and worrying projects. These trends in conservatism culminated with the election of Donald Trump.

Irrationalism, The Political Right and Collective Identities

Many on the left maintain that, in contrast to conservatives, we must have greater respect for particularity, history, and the deep complexity of human beings in their social worlds.^{xxvi} Conservatives are seen as traditionally supporting a universalistic and moralizing vision of the world, backed up by the assimilatory logic of Capital, the ideological power of liberalism, martial strength of Western hegemons like the United States the United Kingdom. Operating in tandem, these insidious forces operated to marginalize difference at home and crush it abroad, spreading markets through the power of globalization and world institutions while destroying alternative systems of

economic organization, and promoting a universal liberal individualism as the only ideology that was to have any currency in the new unipolar world. This vision found support in traditional academic disciplines, having been expressed in the work of grand narrative oriented authors like Hayek, Francis Fukuyama, Allan Bloom, Milton Friedman, and even left-wing Liberals (often denigrated as apologists for the status quo) such as John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin.

There was considerable merit to this left-wing interpretation of its opponents. During the heyday of the 1980s until the early 2000s, there is no doubt that conservatism—at least in its hegemonic Anglo-Saxon forms—could take on a distinctly universalizing orientation. For concrete examples, one can look at the aggressive interventionism, both military and economic, of Western states in the third world to both depose ideologically opposed regimes and impose often draconian neoliberal policies which gutted welfare systems and threw millions into poverty. Domestically, one can look at the moralistic crackdown of the war on drugs, the establishment of a disciplinary carceral state, and the pushback against affirmative actions programs and other initiatives to ameliorate the plight of historically marginalized peoples. Finally, works of more intellectual stature aside, one can look at the endless saccharine references to the “shining city on the hill” the “indispensable state” made by American conservatives, the continued dismissal of non-capitalist forms of economic organization as “primitive” by virtually everyone, and the endless insistence by commentators that the world needed to become more Westernized.^{xxvii} All this was conducted with little, if any, recognition of the long histories of colonialism, imperialism, and militarism abroad and shrill dismissal of the equally long history of sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia and just about every other prejudice one can think of.

All of this helps explain the attraction of post-modernism to the left. With its rejection of objective truth and morals and all the grand narratives they buttress, to its interest in demonstrating the equal significance of other ways of knowing and expressing, post-modernism must have seemed like a breath of fresh air. But, as I shall argue, the ground has shifted among us. Conservative movements have been able to assimilate the lessons of post-modernism and synthesize them with older reactionary

philosophies. In many ways they have been more successful in this respect than the left ever was, in part because post-modern conservatives have never demonstrated concern about fully embracing the paradoxical consequences of their positions.

To understand how this can be so, we must look back to older and more particularistic forms of conservatism. Naturally, none of these can be neatly deployed in order to explain the post-modern conservatism which has emerged very recently. But they demonstrate genealogically that post-modern conservatism didn't emerge in an intellectual and cultural vacuum. Indeed, as we shall see, there are many respects in which conservatism and post-modernism found each other because they were an organic fit.

Perhaps the most important predecessor of post-modern conservatism, and indeed the movement as a whole, is Edmund Burke. A seminal thinker of the Enlightenment who reacted against that age's overweening faith in reason and truth, Burke famously expressed condemnation of the French Revolutionaries, those innovators with "a selfish temper and confined views."^{xxviii} He was deeply hostile not just to their political views, but the haughty rationalism which seemed to underpin them. Burke argued against the belief of revolutionaries that society could be fundamentally transformed from the ground up, according to some pretentious philosophical scheme with aspirations of objectivity. He insisted that the Revolutionaries argued for an abstract egalitarianism with little appreciation of the labour that went into production, arguing in a populist vein against the "solitude of metaphysical abstraction" that led to radicalism."^{xxix} The abstract rights which they argued for could never be obtained except through a violent and disruptive disintegration of valuable institutions which worked to counter the specious impulses of those who thought they knew better than their ancestors.

Burke held a much more charitable view of the status quo, maintaining that social institutions as they exist in fact were the result of accumulated wisdom and refinement enacted over centuries. More importantly for our purposes, these institutions were specifically tailored to the particularity, to use my terminology the collective identity, of those they purported to govern. Social institutions were responsible for upholding and

promoting virtues in individuals who existed as members of a particular community, and pushed back against the schemes of reformers who sought to break the communitarian social contract which existed between “those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are born.” Burke also recognized that some of the virtues these institutions promoted may have no rational basis, but argued that “prejudice render’s a man’s virtue his habit.”^{xxx}

Burke never quite slipped into endorsing the irrationalism we see today,^{xxxi} but he laid the groundwork for its later assimilation into later branches of conservatism. Burke’s work is surprisingly radical in its emphatic skepticism surrounding the ideas of an objective truth and set of morals which can be discovered or constructed through the power of human reason and apply to all societies at all times. One can see his influence throughout the twentieth century, most notably in the works of Michael Oakeshott, who famously argued that political actors must choose between adopting nihilistic commitment to rationalism and its utilitarian evaluations, or embrace the irrational but far more edifying commitment to one’s culture and social particularity oriented around a habit of “affection and behavior” rather than self-reflection and calculation.^{xxxii} Burke’s irrationalism also colours the work of conservative legalists like Robert Bork, who famously denounced progressives for having little respect for “particularity-respect for difference, circumstance, history, and the irreducible complexity of human beings and human societies,”^{xxxiii} and Antonin Scalia who claimed that the purpose of American law was to express “skepticism that evolving standards of decency always meant progress and that societies always mature as opposed to rot.”^{xxxiv}

Finally, one can see undercurrents of Burkean inspired irrationalism in the neo-conservative rhetoric, now deeply influential once again, about the forthcoming class of civilizations. The “clash” hypothesis is predicated on the belief that collective civilizational identities are the most general explanatory unit of international affairs.^{xxxv} It was developed in explicit opposition to Fukuyaman universalistic narratives about the end of history and the resolution of ideological conflicts. One consequence of the clash hypothesis is that different civilizations may ultimately hold incommensurable values which frame their vision of the world and the way it should be politically ordered. While

Huntington doesn't outright endorse an irrationalist viewpoint, he frequently implies that there is no way to overcome certain civilizational differences through the power of reason or dialogue. Most notably, given the current climate of Islamophobia, Huntington felt that the West and Islam were the most likely civilizations to "clash" in the future because their values and the historical contexts which generated their collective identities were very different.^{xxxvi} This meant that only one could persist into the future, and much of his book's conclusion is taken up with laying out how the West can triumph in this upcoming conflict.

Obviously, none of these thinkers can strictly be called a post-modernist, and indeed many would probably be offended by the label. But it is worth noting the dramatic connections between many post-modern positions and the irrationalist conservatism underpinning many of these author's work. Like post-modernists, the conservative thinkers discussed here either explicitly rejected a belief in objective truth and morals, or at least are skeptical that any can be developed without considerable social dangers. Each of these thinkers instead puts their faith both in the social identities that they belong to, and this is the key move, the values that these social identities need to be expressed values if the lives of the subjects who inhabited these identities were to be truly fulfilling and virtuous. This meant, as put by Bork, organizing political institutions to respect "particularity-respect for difference, circumstance, history, and the irreducible complexity of human beings and human societies."^{xxxvii} In this case, Bork means protecting the particularity of American society and its history, which means pushing back against those who would transform it according to misguided egalitarian schemes.^{xxxviii} More generally it means rejecting any argument which purports to objectively demonstrate that society must be changed, and the previously held social identity and its affiliated values replaced by one that will adhere and express a more adequate morality. In this respect especially, there is much common ground between conservative irrationalism and left post-modern rejections of objective truth and morals. And not coincidentally, both groups wind up arguing for the centrality of collective identities and their affiliated values to a new, non-objectivizing politics. On this normative point, the only area where they notably differ is on the collective identities and values focused on and prioritized.

Obviously a few literary and authorial precedents cannot be used to characterize a social phenomena as complex and vast as contemporary post-modern conservatism. My point in this section has only been to demonstrate a few genealogical and historical links between post-modern conservatism in its contemporary iteration and the irrationalist conservatism of yore. This helps to demonstrate why the shift to post-modern approaches was not, despite its long association with the left, an unparalleled leap for conservatives. The ground had long been laid in the veneration of irrationalism and the consequent focus on social identities and the values held and expressed by their subjects; particularly as expressed through the language of civilizational values. In the next section, I will try to speculate on how contemporary post-modern conservatism emerged, and what its broad connotations are.

Contemporary Post-Modern Conservatism

In this section I will briefly summarize the trends I feel led to the emergence of post-modern conservatism, and some of its more obvious and vulgar consequences. The presentation, for reasons of space, will largely be preliminary. None the less I hope it provide some speculative insight into the modern rival to the left, and perhaps explain some of the reasons for its populist success in the Anglo-American world and Western societies more broadly.

As indicated before, my basic outlook is that in an important sense post-modernism, and the philosophical techniques which emerged to account for it, is best understood as an epoch in the history of the Western World. This implies that post-modernism is the result of various social determinants; modern techno-capitalism amongst them. It is characterized by a collapsing belief in objective truth and morals, and the consequent reorientation towards looking at the social identities of subject and the values they see as expressing those identities.

Why the post-modern epoch emerged is not something I can take up at length here. But I will give a few indicatory examples. Modern techno-capitalism is oriented around what I call the production of difference. Techno-capitalism produces a society

focused on identity because its logics must prevent a genuine individualism from emerging. In this way, it fulfills the prophecy made by Marx and echoed later by Weber that capitalism would produce a society in which “everything that is solid melts into the air.”^{xxxix} The logic of modern techno-capitalism creates a social world characterized by creative destruction.^{xi} In this process, commodities are associated with the expression of individuality that codes the subject’s social identity according to their commercial preferences. In modern societies, this takes the results in consumption for the purposes of both satisfying my immediate wants, and expressing the identity that is embodied in the commodity. When I consume a commodity, it is intended not just to gratify a desire, but to sublimate it as a part of this social identity; that part which can be given expression in the public world with dignity because it is undertaken along the lines commended and authorized by capital. Cars, homes, plants, diets, gym memberships, and social media are all part of this same process of making present what seems absent; an identity that is always to come. But the needs of capital require that this promise of a present identity given social expression never arrives, since this would cease the process of fetishization and consumption.

A good example of this can be found in the processes of globalization. In 1996 Jean Baudrillard claimed that the universal perished in globalization.^{xii} Now it seems that support for the universal ideology of globalization, once a hallmark of the right, has given way to a new tribalization. But globalization of the type theorized by the old universalistic Right, was never going to be the result of techno-capitalism. This is because the process of creative destruction,^{xiii} exacerbated by technology, must always constitute new social identities and affiliate them with an array of commodities to be consumed. The result is an ever-greater focus on identity, but one stripped of individuality. Techno-capitalism must also contribute to the collapsing belief in objective truth and mores, because the values expressive of these social identities are easily reified by commodities both real and virtual. Objective truth and mores would pose a barrier to the process of creative destruction, because they indicate a limit to what can and should be achievable within the logic of techno capitalism. But the process of creative destruction if techno-capitalism must always operate to smash through such barriers to its expansion.

This leads to a situation in which post-modern conservatism can flourish. Post-modern conservatism echoes many of the same points as its irrationalist predecessors, but exacerbates their most extreme tendencies and couples it with the tremendous and often stultifying power of modern technology and capital. Post-modern conservatism, as it manifests on radio, in blogs, and internet websites, is often ironically hostile towards what it takes as the tenants of post-modernism. It is dismissive of the historically valid arguments about marginalization experienced by many peoples. It professes disdain for social context. And most obviously, it is paranoid about any criticisms of Western civilization and its norms, at least those toward which it has some civilizational attachment. But these apparent points of conflict belie the deeper unity between the post-modernism and post-modern conservatism. As always, the most intense political conflicts, operating super structurally above deeper social tensions, are almost always between two groups who operate within similar ideological frameworks. Post-modern conservatism is post-modern because it disdains belief in objective truth and mores, whether offered by science or of social science, and locates normative meaning in a reactionary collective identity and the values associated with that. This also finds expression in its approach to politics. Since there is no objective truth to be found, everything is epistemically levelled and there are no firm criteria for mediating between or evaluating the relative cogency of different value systems. What matters about a value system is that it is attached to the social identity.

All of these trends are exacerbated by the various technologies and medias produced by techno-capitalism. The internet, and its politics of division and immediate incitement, has pushed aside the once hegemonic media which propagated the myths of third way universalistic conservatism. It has been replaced the superficial tribalism of Breitbart and other outlets that reinforce all the trends above, all while demanding respect for reactionary social identities and the values affiliated with them. Value talk is a natural fit for a technological era in which immediacy and what Virillio calls a politics of speed takes the place of reflection and deep political commitments.^{xliii} We have seen how used its resources to evade accountability and instead appeal directly to the values of the alienated subjects who once felt themselves the inevitable masters of the North American continent. Many of the individuals who now support post-modern

conservatism. As we increasingly move deeper into the digital era, these trends will only grow more prominent and evolve in rapid ways no one can anticipate except those best situated to take advantage of them.

Nowhere are these social forces leading to better embodied than in the figure of Donald Trump. Donald Trump is the post-modern right winger par excellence; a technocapitalist famous for his branding rather than the production of substantial commodities. A man who claims to be a tough straight talker, but is seemingly incapable of telling the truth. A man who used his wealth to avoid serving his country in wartime, but then condemns a veteran for being captured and torture. A billionaire who claims to speak for the revolutionary working class, but who has used every opportunity available to him to exploit cheap labour and avoid paying taxes for vital public services. Who claims to have attended the best schools, but cannot even recall where America is at war at any given moment. Someone who defends his temperament as above reproach, but takes advantage of new technologies to lash out at his real and perceived enemies for the pettiest reasons. Who has spent his life working for only for himself, but condemns immigrants -legal and otherwise- who come to the country seeking to improve their lot. Who is a sexual predator, and called for the execution of several men who were falsely convicted of rape and murder. All of this ignored by voters whose values he claimed to embody better than anyone else.

Post-modern conservatism is ascendant across the Anglo-Saxon world, as manifested in the election of the Pynchonesque Donald Trump, and the Brexit decision of the United Kingdom. It has worryingly bubbled to the surface in the civilizational nationalism of Marine Le-Pen, the xenophobic political-theology of Geert Wilders, and the Crusader mentality of the Law and Justice Party of Poland. Each of these movements and parties has abandoned the old conservative universalism and turned inward. It has adopted the rhetoric and symbolism of a reactionary collective identity, sometimes linking more broadly with the like minded in other Western states, sometimes keeping things at the level of a crude nationalism. In each case, post-modern conservative movements relied on the alienation engendered by technocapitalism to push an agenda critical of globalization, integration, and universalistic

movements. The old universalistic conservative stalwarts, embodied by figures dead- William Buckley- and living - Nicolas Sarkozy- were rudely swept away for their conformity and alleged support for a globalizing order. They were replaced by figures who were relativistic, dismissive or even ignorant of the idea of truth, and consequently all the more aggressive in using the technologies that facilitated their rise to push ideological products promoting this agenda. To the extent that they have achieved political success, whether through seizing power or advancing policies, they have changed both the substance of politics and its form. Indeed, their post-modern attitude furthers the liquidation of this very distinction, as the structure of government and the formal division of powers are often dismissed as outdated impediments to the restoration of an even more outdated world.

What is rarely acknowledged about this is the paradox that reactionary politics always hope to restore what is gone, and in doing so brings about the new.^{xliv} What goes unacknowledged is the reality that reactionary politics is itself always novel. Its impotence is expressed in attempts to rewind history all while deepening the transformation of society. Nowhere is this better expressed than in post-modern politics, which seeks to bring back a stable, Christian order of universally acceptable norms while promoting and deploying rhetoric and tools that enable to rise of relativism, identity politics, and the language of values rather than that of truth and morals.

My point in this section is not to blame many of the adherents of post-modern conservatism for the vulgarity and even violence of their outlook. One of the consequences of adopting an epochal approach to the study of the post-modern era is recognizing the impact of social-determinants on individual's beliefs and behaviors. This is especially important when looking at the impact of techno-capitalism when engendering the rise of post-modern conservatism. Many of the same individuals who have been displaced and marginalized by the logic of techno-capitalism, whether through its globalizing efforts to transcend the limitations of the market economy, or its transition from an industrial focus to one oriented around the production of knowledge and technology, have every reason to feel alienated. They've also looked upon the relativism and promulgation of social identities in this new epoch with alarm and disdain;

often missing of willfully ignoring that techno-capitalism is in no small part responsible for the creation of these identities through processes of both marginalization and reification. The sad reality is that the powerful social forces that have aligned with, promote, and evolve from post-modern conservatism has been more adept in recognizing and playing on these trends than the left. They recognized the fundamental anxieties, some valid and others questionable, of many in the so called white working class and translated into an actionable politics oriented around protecting a “victimized” social identity and promoting its civilizational values. Post modern conservatives contrasted this social identity and its values with those of elite groups in society, including academics and politicians, all while insulating techno-capitalism and embedded social hierarchies, such as those predicated on race, sexual orientation, and gender, from deep criticism. This enabled post-modern conservatives to promote traditional power structures, whether it be capitalist polyarchy in the United States or the French nation in France, while still casting themselves as populist levellers who expressed the values of a now marginalized social identity.

I believe post-modern conservatism was successful in these measures in no small part because the language of social identity and values comes quite readily to conservatives generally. We saw in the last section that irrationalist conservatism has deep roots which prepared the way for the post-modernism of the right now ascendant. It was a small step to abandon the universalistic rhetoric once associated with conservatives (and the classical left for that matter) and give the irrationalist commitments to a social identity and its values a post-modern twist. Indeed, this latter shift is in keeping with the long history of conservative figures dismissing the rationalism of progressives, whether in the name of preserving the social contract with the dead, preventing society from moral rot, or preserving what one can of a social and cultural particularity.

In part for this reason, in part for others, in the final section of this paper, I will argue that the left must gradually wean itself off of certain variants of post-modern discourse. This is both because it now feeds into a culture which abets post-modern conservatism, and because it has been unsuccessful in inspiring deep social change.

For the left to once again capture the imagination of all marginalized peoples, it must find an inspiring philosophy to rally behind. Such a philosophy should draw from the insights of post-modernism and, of course, not abandon the critical task of subjecting pretentious claims concerning truth and morality to criticism. But it must also set agendas for the future that will appeal to all regardless of their social identity and values.

The (Re)Turn to Constructive Theorizing on the Left

Social identity and value talk gained credence with the collapsing belief in objective truth and morals. Many on the left felt that this could only be a good thing. It would enable marginalized voices to finally have their say. Sadly, as we have seen, this has not entirely been the case. The right has clearly learnt how to deploy the language of values, and recognized that we have entered an era where blatantly contradictory positions can be a strength rather than a weakness.

These trends indicate some of the problems with approaching post-modernism as an eternally valid set of techniques, and not recognizing it in epochal terms. The post-modern epoch we live within has produced a social world where both left and right have come to abandon a belief in objective truth and morals. While the left was the first to recognize this trend and theorize on it, the right has learnt that it is fully capable of taking advantage of the conditions created by the post-modern epoch as well. In some ways, it was always better suited to it. Many of the left, especially those who saw social identities and the values associated with them as needing expression, failed to recognize the potentially conservative dimensions of their thinking. Once identity is taken as the static locus of meaning, with an affiliated set of values in need of expression, it is no great leap to moving towards believing that external forces, even progressive ones, are a threat to a settled core of convictions that should be left undisturbed. This is one of the reasons I have always had more sympathy with the anti-essentialist post-modernism of theorists like Judith Butler. These positions move close to the idea that identity should be the product of deliberative human agency, free from repressive external forces. This moves close to a more constructive position. However,

few anti-essentialist post-modern thinkers ever undertook the task of developing constructive projects.^{xlv} Most limited themselves to theorizing on forces of social repression and left it at that.

The only way for the left to respond to post-modern conservatism is to gradually move towards such constructive projects. We need to rediscover or invent a new core set of general convictions that can both inspire people and whose worth goes beyond simple appeals to our preferences. In other words, we need to start boldly calling for measures that we can demonstrate will make the underprivileged better off, and our society as a whole, more just. This means making very concrete proposals on what we want to achieve, and drawing from undoctinaire sources where we must. We should also stop deploying the language of values and preferences in favour of a more militant demand for justice. If we rely on the latter, we only feed into a culture which the right has manipulated with far greater acumen and cunning. But such piecemeal steps can only take us so far. What is required now is a movement towards more constructive and bold thought on the needs of the future.

Of course, it is easier to express desire for this, and another thing to provide a precise set of alternatives. There are also some caveats that need to be offered. By no means am I proposing that the left needs to enact any kind of return to the outdated and often unfeasible grand narratives of the past. Though there are some who would no doubt welcome these developments, perhaps invoking the specter of Communism hanging over contemporary theory, these approaches had their time and are now primarily of historical interest. No doubt there will still be much to learn from gleaning from the past. But it strikes me as deeply unlikely that one can simply hope that a return to Orthodox Marxism or Platonism^{xlvi} will provide the theoretical and practical resources needed. I also by no means wish to propose abandoning the critical task of left-wing post-modernism, which plays a vital role in undermining prejudicial narratives and describing the intersecting operations of power and discourse that pervade the social world. But I do believe we need to move beyond limiting ourselves simply to this critical task.

I think that there are multiple ways one can begin to approach developing more constructive and bold proposals for a progressive future. At one level, one can look to innovative proposals which might not seem entirely radical on the surface, but have the potential to be transformative if successfully and broadly implemented. One proposal, debated around the globe and supported by notable anthropologists working in developing countries, would be for a universal living wage paid out to all but retained primarily by the poor. This proposal has been made by social anthropologists like Ferguson,^{xlvii} and its radical potential noted by even as hard nosed a Leftist as Zizek in several recent articles and interviews.^{xlviii} Proposing a universal living wage might also have some unintended strategic benefits in terms of coalition building. As has been widely noted, the universal living wage was given (admittedly tepid) support by no less a conservative icon as Milton Friedman, and has generated some interest in more traditionally conservative circles. Proposing a universal living wage might also be a way to sway individuals in precarious employment who may now be attracted to post-modern conservatism for economic reasons, feeling the left has little to offer them.

Another, more modest proposal, was put forward by Thomas Piketty in his recent blockbuster *Capital in the 21st Century*.^{xlix} Piketty argued for implementing a global wealth tax of up to 2 per cent, and a progressive income tax of up to 80 per cent being imposed on the wealthiest individuals and estates. He feels that these measures are essential if we are to avoid entering a new “gilded age” as described in the novels of Austen and Balzac. Many on the left may think this is insufficiently radical since it retains the basic structure of techno-capitalism;^l thus leaving fundamentally alienating and exploitative practices untouched. But Piketty’s proposal is actually more radical than often acknowledged; especially when we think of the political difficulties that would be involved in implementing such progressive tax policies. It would involve a level of global coordination and regulation heretofore unseen to prevent the wealthy from continuing to shield their money through tax evasion and shelters. Not only would implementing such a progressive tax policy be good in itself, but the precedent it set would also be a good step in a more egalitarian direction. The monies generated also be used to implement a number of progressive policies; perhaps some of it could even be funnelled back to national basic income programs?

These are two concrete proposals that might be constructive steps forward for the left. They operate on the micro-level of involving non-structural transformations of the social world. While they leave techno-capitalism intact, they might none the less ameliorate its worst impacts and establish precedents for more radical action. It is also possible that they might have unforeseen positive benefits which we cannot yet predict.

As to the grander question of how to engage in large scale structural transformation: there are several steps that might be taken. One might be to take more seriously contemporary radical theories which attempt to replicate the sweep and depth of classical left-wing thought, while avoiding its limitations and prejudices. The most useful theories would engage in truly transdisciplinary work that demonstrates, or at least attempts to explain, the interactive dimensions of contemporary social orders and their more repressive mechanisms. A good example would be the work of Roberto Unger. Unger was one of the founders of the critical legal studies movement, but his work now goes well beyond law to encompass radical and important pieces on the state, economy, psychology, philosophy, and even physics. He is also sensitive to the limitations and prejudices of classical left-wing thought, especially its pretentious aspirations to scientificity and strict objectivity. Instead, Unger calls on us to reject the “false necessity” of various forms of determinism and think of how to create new social contexts within which deeper forms of individuality and community might simultaneously emerge.^{li} This is an intriguing left-wing vision that deserves renewed attention.

Finally, I will say that many on the left might find insight in the work of analytical political philosophy; particularly the egalitarian theories of Rawls,^{lii} Dworkin, Sen, and Nussbaum. While this might seem cloying, it is still the case that many continentally inspired left wing theorists continue to work as if their analytical peers did not exist. They only venture to engage with them where the impulse is to do battle. This can be seen even in otherwise broad minded scholars like Zizek, who engages with Rawls’ only sporadically and always dismissively,^{liii} or Agamben^{liiv}, who writes about law’s potential for exclusion without ever engaging Dworkin’s arguments that it can be used as a means to redistribute wealth.^{liv} Sen and Nussbaum are also useful interlocutors; their capabilities approach provides a robust theoretical architecture that enables us to think

more concretely about the day to day ways freedom can be amplified for the world's poorest.^{lv}

None of these proposals is intended to be decisive. But I think any of them would be a useful way to move the left away from the important but ultimately limited and now strategically dangerous projects presented by the post-modern epoch. They will be needed in the future as post-modern conservatism becomes an ever more prevalent social force in the world, and the reach of techno capitalism grows.

Notes & References

ⁱ Friedrich Nietzsche. *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), 199.

ⁱⁱ I would like to note that the historical account that I am giving here is linked to a set of functional conclusions about whether the language of values has any long-term use for progressive movements. I have put aside here more directly philosophical questions about meta-ethics and the possibility of developing objective moral truths, since this task is more abstract and not necessarily germane to my point here.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Martin Heidegger. *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt. (New York: Harper Perennial, 1977)

^{iv} See Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edund Jephcott. (California: Stanford University Press, 2002) and Herbert Marcuse. *One Dimensional Man*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964)

^v See Herbert Marcuse. *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974) and Erich Fromm. *Escape from Freedom*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994)

^{vi} The relationship of French post-modern theory and the critical theories of the German Frankfurt school is the subject of ongoing debate. It seems clear that both have had a formative impact on North American critical theory.

^{vii} The case of Deleuze is somewhat more complex. While his logic of transcendental empiricism does stress the need to continuously create new concepts in line with "deterritorializing" one's subjectivity, his earlier work on univocity and difference occasionally suggests there are such things as ontological truths. See Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994)

^{viii} On the Deleuze point see Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 1994.

^{ix} Jean Francois Lyotard. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984)

^x Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, 37

^{xi} See Richard Rorty. *Philosophy and Social Hope*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 155.

^{xii} See Alain Badiou. *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II*, trans. Alberto Toscano. (London, UK. Continuum, 2009), 1

^{xiii} See the "Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History" in Michel Foucault. *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow. (New York, NY. Pantheon Books, 1984) 76-100.

^{xiv} See Friedrich Nietzsche. *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. (New York, NY: Vintage, 1969), 127.

^{xv} See Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Silence: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix in Songs*. (New York, NY. Vintage Books, 1974), 181.

^{xvi} My reading here is in part inspired by George Grant. See George Grant. *Technology and Empire*. (Scarborough, ON. House of Anansi Press, 1995), 17.

^{xvii} I draw some inspiration here from Wendy Brown's reading of Nietzsche. See Wendy Brown. "Wounded Attachments." *Political Theory*, Vol 1, (1993), 400-408.

^{xviii} See Friedrich Nietzsche. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Graham Parks. (Oxford, UK. Oxford University Press, 2005)

^{xix} I believe we have few reasons to follow Nietzsche on these last points, especially if we are committed to an egalitarian project. His elitism and belief in a superior type of people has been cast in political terms as a kind of "perfectionism"-the claim that the goal of a just society is to produce great individuals who produce values for the rest of us to live by. The arguments for perfectionism have never struck me as especially convincing, though I do not have time to unpack why here.

^{xx} Allan Bloom is a typical conservative author who reacted against this shift in defence of the canon. See Allan Bloom. *Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*. (New York, NY. Simon and Schuster, 2012)

^{xxi} This is an important technical point. I think one can distinguish between those who follow Jameson, Lyotard, Baudrillard and others- who view post-modernism as an era or epoch in Western history- from those like Derrida, Foucault, Spivak and others who approach it as (paradoxically) a set of timeless philosophical techniques or stances. Then there are those, such as Richard Rorty, who fall into a middle ground and believe that we should inaugurate a new pragmatic age by understanding and deploying on the more pragmatically useful intellectual tools provided by anti-foundationalism. The distinction is important since those who view post-modernism as an epoch, such as myself, tend to its popularity in abstract theoretical circles as emerging as a result of material and historical trends which theory can attempt to answer. Those who view it as a timeless set of techniques and stances are in a more unclear position, since they must argue for the continued relevance of post-modern positions after the time period which birthed them passes. But this gives way to a puzzling dilemma; does it mean that these techniques and stances might actually have some permanent importance. In other words, do post-modern techniques and stances hit on foundational issues that seem precluded by their very theoretical architecture?

^{xxii} How this essence emerges varies from author to author.

^{xxiii} The classic study on this point is Foucault's. See Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1975). I by no means intend to imply that Foucault himself held to essentialist views, but his critical techniques are often deployed by those who do.

^{xxiv} Spivak and Butler are important authors in this tradition. See Spivak, Gayatri. *A Critique of Post-Colonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) and Judith Butler. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. (Stanford, CA. Stanford University Press, 1997) for representative examples of their work.

^{xxv} Unger is a noticeable example.

^{xxvi} As articulated in much of the literature, I have no problem with this position given a progressive slant. The problem as we see is the way it has been reconfigured.

^{xxvii} See The Federalist Society. *Originalism: A Quarter Century of Debate*, ed. Steven G. Calabresi. (Washington DC. Regnery Publishing INC. 2007)

^{xxviii} See Edmund Burke. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7-8.

^{xxix} See Burke, *Reflections*, 91

^{xxx} See Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. (London, UK. Penguin Books, 1986), 183.

^{xxxi} Burke retained many liberal opinions, and wasn't opposed to gradual reform.

^{xxxii} See Oakshott, Michael. *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*. (London, UK. Methuen, 1962), 61.

^{xxxiii} Robert Bork. *Coercing Virtue: The Worldwide Rule of Judges*. (Toronto, ON: Vintage Canada, 2002), 5

^{xxxiv} See Antonin Scalia. "Common Law Courts in the Civil Law System: The Role of United States Federal Courts in Interpreting the Constitution and Laws" in *A Matter of Interpretation*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 40-41.

^{xxxv} See Samuel P. Huntington. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. (New York, NY. Simon and Schuster, 1996)

^{xxxvi} See Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 254-258.

^{xxxvii} Bork, *Coercing Virtue*, 5.

^{xxxviii} This last point relates to a dilemma that has never been adequately dealt with by any left post-modern theorist who believes that the values held by marginalized collective identities must be given expression. But if collective identity is the source of all values, then what about the collective identity of subjects who hold to conservative views? Are they not just as important for their subjects?

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- ^{xxxix} See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. David McLellan. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.
- ^{xl} See Joseph Schumpeter. *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy: Third Edition*. (New York, NY: HarperPerennial, 2008)
- ^{xli} See Jean Baudrillard. *Screened Out*. (London: Verso Press, 2002), 169.
- ^{xlii} See Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*.
- ^{xliii} See Paul Virillio. *The Information Bomb* (London: Verso Press, 2006)
- ^{xliv} Zizek has noted this paradox a number of times.
- ^{xlv} Hardt and Negri are notable exceptions. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. *Commonwealth*. (Boston, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 304-305.
- ^{xlvi} Badiou is representative here. See Alain Badiou. *Conditions*, trans. Steven Corcoran. (London: Continuum, 2008), 163.
- ^{xlvii} James Ferguson. *Give a Man a Fish*. (United States: Duke University Press, 2015)
- ^{xlviii} See Slavoj Zizek. "Zizek-Basic Income." Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tVmSHEIKwk>. Published on 13 September 2015.
- ^{xlix} See Piketty, Thomas. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014)
- ^l See David Harvey. "Afterthoughts on Piketty's Capital." *Socialist Worker.org* <https://socialistworker.org/blog/critical-reading/2014/05/18/david-harvey-reviews-thomas-pi>, May 17 2014 for a representative account.
- ^{li} See Roberto Unger. *Politics Volume One: False Necessity*. (London, UK: Verso Press, 2004), 87-96.
- ^{lii} See John Rawls. *Political Liberalism: With a New Introduction and the 'Reply to Habermas.'* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1993) and John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971)
- ^{liii} For an indicative comment, see Jonathan Derbyshire. "Interview with Slavoj Zizek: Full Transcript." *New Statesman*, 29 October 2009. "SZ: I know some British guys and I had a debate with them. It's the same problem with John Rawls. Rawls himself, when he was confronted with his critics, admitted one thing: that his model of distributive justice, the difference principle etc, works on one fateful condition: that there is no resentment. That is to say, given the way we are libidinally structured in modern societies, envy and resentment are crucial. Rawls doesn't take into account the irrationality of envy. Capitalism takes much better of it. Although these analytical Marxists want to be "no-bullshit" analysts, the ultimate image of human being it is based on is way too naïve and utopian. I don't think the socialist project can be reduced to this. But nonetheless I claim that in capitalist relations today, envy is crucial. Never underestimate the power of envy. This is a psychoanalytic insight."
- ^{liv} See Giorgio Agamben. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998)
- ^{lv} See Ronald Dworkin. *Sovereign Virtue: The Theory and Practice of Equality*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002)
- ^{lvi} See Amartya Sen. *Development as Freedom*. (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1999)