Article published in Soundings 35, March 2007, pp 16-30

The Long Revolution revisited

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In this article, I want to look again at the ideas of Raymond Williams in *The Long Revolution* (first published in 1961) - which was an inspiring statement of the political perspective of the early new left. It was a hopeful book, combining a belief in a progressive historical evolution with recognition of the continuing obstacles to progress. Williams's thinking was rooted in his experience both of class and of culture, and the originality of his synthesis lay in his attempt to bring these dimensions of understanding together.

He saw in the achievement of full citizenship by working people a profound challenge to two kinds of established class power - the power of what was originally a landed elite, linked with the military and the empire, and the power of modern corporate capitalism.[1] He saw the institutions of the state, and its 'service class', as combining the interests of both these social formations. And he believed that aristocratic and capitalist forms of power had long been under pressure from below, through movements of working people seeking their freedom from subordination, and through ideas which expressed their claims. He saw the 'long revolution' as taking place in three spheres. The first was economic - the development of a modern industrial economy had conferred real benefits on the majority of people, in terms of economic prosperity, security, dignity and power. The second was political. Against the grain of liberal political theory, Williams saw the rise of democracy as primarily the practical achievement of the working-class movement. He thus linked the struggle for democratisation to a profound change in the balance of power of social classes. The third sphere in the long revolution - and this was the most original part of the argument - was that of the cultural: Williams had a vision of all citizens participating fully in a 'common culture'. He focused attention on the role of media technologies and education in the development of modern societies - most chapters in the book are about cultural institutions and forms.

A highly original chapter on creativity developed the conception of human nature on which his argument depends. This chapter drew on the tradition of cultural criticism he had explored in his previous book *Culture and Society*, and on his readings in contemporary psychology and biology. He set out his view of a good society as one that would be dedicated to shared learning in all its institutions and practices. *The Long Revolution* moved beyond the state-focused conceptions of planning that had dominated the conceptions of thought and action of both the Labour Party and the Communist Party, to develop an organic perspective of change which looked beyond governments. He sought to articulate a politics of alternative values, rooted in the

[1] Incidentally, his conceptualisation of British society as organised around these three contending class formations was unexceptional in the 1960s, as indeed it had been, from all points of the ideological compass, for 150 years. Harold Wilson was shortly to fight the 1964 election as a campaign against the residues of aristocratic power, represented by the former Lord Home. It was in this period of the early 1960s that the contemporary debate about 'modernisation' began.

emergent aspirations and experiences of social agents and collectivities. This remained the dominant theme of his later political writing.

Towards 2000

Williams returned to the analysis of *The Long Revolution* in *Towards 2000*, which was published in 1983. He included in this book most of the final chapter of the earlier volume, reappraising its argument in the light of what had happened in the intervening decades. Its last chapter was called 'Resources for a Journey of Hope', although Williams anticipated a quarter century of setbacks and acknowledged that change in a positive direction was bound to be slow, contested, and confusing. That after all was the essential idea of a 'long revolution'. In 1983 he saw the force and persistence with which capitalist institutions were committed to remaking the world. He named as 'Plan X' what we might now describe as a concerted neo-capitalist strategy to turn back the democratic revolution and fashion the world in terms of capital, individualism, and the market, and to pursue the cold war to a victorious conclusion. And these developments did indeed take place in the following years. He recognised in *Towards 2000* the nature and effects of de-industrialisation, the weakening solidarities of class, the deep democratic deficit of political institutions in Britain, and the development of a culture of consumption - what he called 'mobile privatisation' - as continuing obstructions to social advance. He identified as forces for good new movements for disarmament, for the protection of the environment, for the rights of women, and for an alternative culture, but noted how these oppositional forces tended to become isolated and marginalised within the dominant political system. Williams continued to argue without apology as a socialist, juxtaposing to the ownership of capital, and to hierarchical modes of control in most institutions, the idea of a democratic, self-determining way of life to which people could contribute freely in accordance with their capacities and needs.

A weakness in Williams's argument was his lack of attention to the immediate, and, as it turned out, the decisive political conjuncture of the early 1980s. He had a preference for thinking in the *longue durée*, identifying deep changes in cultural, economic and social forms. He was interested above all in connectedness, and in the impingements of a complex society and culture on lived experience. But these ways of thinking, and his dislike of instrumental political practices, left little space for thinking about the more contingent aspects of political conflicts and their sometimes critical outcomes.

In 1983, when *Towards 2000* was published, Britain was emerging from the exceptional crisis in social relations of the 1970s, during which the uneasy class compromise of the post-war welfare state collapsed in successive governmental failures - first of the Tories under Heath, then of Labour under Wilson and Callaghan. The entire governmental system, Conservative and Labour establishments alike, experienced these events as deeply traumatic, putting at risk, as they saw it, the survival of the British social order itself, which was deemed to have arrived at a state of 'ungovernability'. [2] The 'counter-revolution' pursued by the Thatcherites, and continued under Blair, cannot be understood unless one sees as its shadow a dreaded

[2] On these political dimensions, Stuart Hall's writing in that period, from *Policing the Crisis* (1978) with Charles Critcher, John Clarke, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts, to the classic essays published in *Marxism Today* and later reprinted in *The Hard Road to Renewal* (1988) were more incisive.

state of anarchy, or even social revolution, that in their view *almost happened*. The reaction of the left to the failure of the Wilson-Callaghan government, in the attempted radicalisation after 1979 of the Labour Party and the trade unions under the leaderships of Benn and Scargill, seemed to further justify these anxieties, provoking the split in the Labour Party in the formation of the SDP. But in fact this radicalisation, weakly represented in the leadership of Michael Foot, and then rejected and attacked by Neil Kinnock, was easily crushed. The real earthquakes had occurred in the IMF Crisis of 1976, and in the Winter of Discontent of 1979, and these later events were aftershocks.

Williams observed Labour governments fail to make much of their opportunities to advance 'the long revolution' in both the 1960s and 1970s. He saw the repeated absorption of elected representatives of working-class movements by the routines and mentalities of the ruling system, disabling the sources of democratic action, as part of the landscape. He recognised at an early stage the political degeneration which was taking place even inside the radical class forces of those years. He wrote in *The Long Revolution* of the 'visible moral decline of the labour movement', and later expressed disquiet at the terms of some of the radical militancy of the 1970s. He described a regression taking place in the working-class movement from a politics of alternative values, to one of competitive advantage.[3] In *Towards 2000* he charted the gathering strength of capitalist mentalities. But he did not recognise, except in the abstract terms of 'Plan X', the fierceness and vindictiveness of the right's determination to settle accounts with the post-war class compromise of 'consensus politics' which it called 'socialism'.

Williams, as a socialist, seems to have had more confidence in the stability of the British social system than whose who believed themselves entitled by birth and formation to govern it. He saw the strikes and election defeats of those years as the normal tensions of a capitalist democracy, while the governing establishment perceived them as threats to its very existence. But it turned out that the revolutionary force in Britain at this time emerged on the right, not the left.

The full potential of this counter-revolution was not yet fully evident in 1983 when *Towards 2000* was published. It seems probable that, without her military success in the Falklands War in 1982, Thatcher would have lost office in 1983 or 1984, and that some kind of post-war consensus could have been restored in the less inflationary economic conditions of the 1980s.[4] The Thatcher government was seen in 1982 to be responsible for de-industrialisation and mass unemployment, and it was highly unpopular until the Falklands War came to its rescue.[5] It had by then achieved few of

[3] It was through this shift of attitudes that solidarities would soon be undermined by the Thatcherites' appeal to individual self-interest, even among trade unionists. The Tories key voter targets in 1979 were skilled workers whose wage-claims were being restrained by corporatist incomes policies; and the enforced sale of council houses, under the 'right-to-buy legislation of 1981, set out to dissolve another source of collective identification.

[4] The deferred costs of the Vietnam War and the surge in oil prices following the Arab-Israeli war of 1973 contributed to the exceptional inflation of the 1970s, which amplified the social tensions of the time.

[5] After the Falklands War, the popularity of the Thatcher government rose in the polls from 23% to 33%. But while its unpopularity before the War was real enough, it is uncertain what the opposition parties - Labour, led by Michael Foot, and the SDP, at parity with Labour in the polls - could have achieved if Thatcher had then been defeated. Could some revised 'class settlement' have been

its decisive reforms.[6] The windfall North Sea oil revenues which were in effect used to pay the costs of de-industrialisation and of poor relief for the unemployed would have been a considerable resource for a consensual government, of either party, as can be seen from the example of Norway. The other major nations of Western Europe found ways out of the crises of the late 1960s and 1970s different from Britain's neo-liberalism. Thatcherism has had major and lasting consequences since 1983, but this outcome was by no means assured before 1983.

Obstacles to the long revolution

What Raymond Williams saw as the possibility of an ultimately socialist revolution, evolving with difficulty from successive class settlements and compromises, has instead been resolved for the time being in Britain in a different way. The 'Plan X' that Williams named as a concerted strategy to enforce the dominance of capitalism, in fact became the programme of the Thatcher, Major and Blair governments. A combination of a strong and centralised state, and a particular British configuration of resources, made possible a neo-liberal restructuring of the social order more thorough than in any other nation in Western Europe. Where industrial decline had been deemed a national problem in the 1960s, blamed by many on the dead weight of aristocracy and empire, by the 1980s it was conceived as opening up new opportunities. Globalisation was embraced for the prospects it offered to certain sectors of the economy - notably the financial sector, but also retailing, tourism, and the 'creative industries' - and its costs to manufacturing were dismissed by neo-liberals as the collateral damage of modernisation.

Since 1978, manufacturing in Britain has reduced its share of Gross Domestic Product and employment by approximately half. In the same period, the share of the financial sector has doubled. (During this time manufacturing has not declined to the same degree in Germany, which remains a competitive industrial nation with a large trade surplus.) Although the dominant element of an economy is always less than its totality, leading-edge sectors often exercise hegemony over both the economy and the wider society. Just as this was the case for the Fordist mass production of household consumer goods and motor cars in the period from the 1930s to the 1960s, and to a lesser degree for the creative and fashion industries of the 1960s, so it is now for the financial sector. Increasing inequalities of wealth and income, and a growing economic disparity between London and the South East and the rest of the country, reflect the national decline in manufacturing and the rise of finance. So does the fall in trade union membership in the private sector, and the consequent weakening of Labour's core vote and culture. Even so, considering Labour's continuing dependence on its electorates in the Midlands and North, it is extraordinary that its numerous MPs from these regions have remained such feeble spectators of their regions' loss of investment and employment. [7]

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constructed, less radical than the counter-revolution that actually took place?

[6] The key ones were the deregulation of the City in the 'Big Bang' of 1986; trade union reforms; the compulsory sale of council houses; privatisation of public industries; marketising reforms in the public sector. Only the 'right to buy' was fully effected in the first Thatcher term, with only cautious steps towards trade union reform and privatisation. Deregulation of the City led to major buy-outs by American banks, strengthening economic ties to the USA.

[7] Virtually all of the major transport investments now being undertaken or considered by the Blair governments - Channel Tunnel extension, Crossrail, the East London Line and London Orbital Railway, Thameslink, and the projected Heathrow and Stansted runways - are in the London area.

The generation of wealth from the global trading assets - often little more than gambling on future values - is different from modes of production in which continuing relationships with employees and consumers are a precondition of competitive success. In the financial economy, fortunes are made by fractional deductions from massive capital flows - a few gain massively from small fractional charges levied on millions of pension-fund holders and the like. It is only as expectations of excessive reward have spread from city elites, to the entire cadre of chief executive officers, in private and public sectors alike, that the broader social consequences of the financial sector's dominance are now seen. (The growing salience of gambling, in New Labour's enthusiasm for the National Lottery and casinos, and in television gambling-shows, is one cultural symptom. Increasing income inequalities are another. [8]) These disparities in incomes are legitimated by the necessities of global competition, but while there are international markets for the services of footballers or film stars, there are none for most executive posts in public or private sectors. These growing inequalities have little functional economic purpose. They are an abuse of corporate power.

Britain's imperial traditions, linked to the role of the city, have continued to be central to the self-definition of the British governing class, from Thatcher to Blair. It is no longer easy to defend imperial rule *per se*, so the assertion of global influence by military force is instead justified in the cause of human rights and democracy, and as part of the war against terrorism and 'extremism'. These global ambitions are unsustainable for Britain in isolation from the United States, and thus the alliance with the Americans is seen as an unquestionable necessity. (More so, in fact, than it was under Wilson or Heath, when the project of 'modernisation' seem to point in more 'industrial' and thus European directions.) The defence export industry, which Robin Cook sought to bring under some kind of ethical control, maintains its primacy in this continuing imperial project.

The peculiar strength of the British state

What has seemed paradoxical in the past twenty-five years has been the continuing dependence of Britain's neo-liberal economic system on the exceptionally forceful exercise of central state power. Under Thatcher, this could be explained by the use of the state as a sledgehammer to subdue class collectivism. Without it, the corporate power of working class institutions could not have been defeated. But in the later years of Tory government, and under Blair, governmental power has been deployed not only for purposes of coercive control, but also in more 'positive' ways, to open up formerly public forms of production to private sector exploitation (through PFIs and the like), and to re-engineer public mentalities in a consumerist and individualised direction, via the machineries of targets, inspections, audit, and performance indicators. The justification of marketisating reforms in public services such as health and education is a demand for consumer choice which in fact barely exists. (Most citizens say they prefer good local services to the right to choose.) But once public services have been constructed as markets, there will be no way of relating to them other than as consumers. This is a project in which people are being forced to be free.

[8] Richard Wilkinson's argument (*The Impact of Inequality* 2002) that inequality causes ill-health suggests another large consequence of this situation. We can think of obesity and anti-social behaviour as in part social illnesses brought about by social humiliation.

In spite of these government-driven moves towards a market society, there has been no diminution in the weight of the state (public expenditure has remained remarkably consistent as a share of gross national product), and this calls for explanation. Given their neo-liberal ideology, why have successive governments not brought Britain closer to the lower American level of public spending?
Part of the explanation no doubt lies in the inertial power of the unusually centralised British state, accruing power to itself and its functionaries whenever opportunities allow. (France, Italy, Germany, Spain, the USA, Australia and Canada all have more devolved systems of government.) But one might also look for explanation to some functional requirements of the British capitalist system. For example, the social polarisation inherent in de-industrialisation and the dominance of the financial sector is a threat to social cohesion, sometimes manifested in actual disturbances. The state therefore becomes more forceful, adopting measures to reduce poverty and social exclusion, and to reinsert citizens into the labour market by sanctions and re-education. It becomes afraid of social disorganisation as this is reflected in increasing crime and disorder (or the fear of these), and has been hyperactive in its policies of control, with exceptionally high rates of imprisonment, ASBOS, and toughenings-up of the criminal justice system. Thus the pursuit of individualism leads to demands for an ever-stronger state to contain its disintegrative effects. This is one aspect of the 'authoritarian populism' earlier characterised by Stuart Hall.

Another cause of the persistent strength of central government is the weakness of many sectors of British capital, which cannot be relied upon to maintain their competitive edge without the intervention of the state. Two of Britain's few globally competitive industries, armaments (including aerospace) and pharmaceuticals, have enjoyed the support of government through defence procurement and the purchasing power of the NHS, and through the state funding of scientific research. Britain's success in many 'creative industries' owes a lot to its universities and specialist educational institutions, in art, drama and music, and perhaps also to the BBC.

Some sectors were bound to grow in an advanced economy, such as the human services of education, health and social care, hitherto located primarily in the public sector. In order to provide opportunities for private capital, governments decided to open them up for exploitation, usually against the resistance of both service-users and providers. In this sector there has therefore been both privatisation and increased government supervision. Similarly**,** quasi-monopoly providers of material goods and services such as transport and energy have been privatised, but their powers turned out to be so prone to abuse as to need recurrent intervention by the state.

It seems too that the Labour Party and the trade unions, and the Labour electorate, have quietly exacted a price for sustaining Labour in office, for example in the shape of (eventual) investments in public services such as health and education, and in the enforcement of a minimum wage. Although the language of class conflict has virtually disappeared from the contemporary political vocabulary, the contradictions of class remain a significant latent presence in the British social system. However, whereas the role of the state until the 1970s was to maintain some kind of equilibrium between organised class forces, since the 1970s it has become unambiguously identified with the interests of capital. As a result, New Labour has at some points enjoyed more business support than the Conservatives. The goal of the New Labour state is to sustain a viable market society, all aspirations for its eventual

transformation into a higher form of life having been expunged in the internal party reforms of the past two decades.

The history of the last twenty-five years has shown the key importance of campaigning for democratic reform of the British state. Its nexus of finance, empire, and monarchy has provided sustained support for the neo-liberal revolution, and has served to disable resistance to market encroachment. The strength of the British state has made possible the new authoritarian class settlement, since the checks and balances that existed within the system were largely informal, and could be disregarded by governments intent on imposing a new political and economic settlement. This highlights the continuing importance of the 'democratisation' agenda' – though it perhaps also points to a serious obstacle to organic change**.**

The Long Revolution today

Where does this updated analysis leave us, in terms of the contemplation of political alternatives? How might reading Raymond Williams's political writings guide us in the serious impasse in which the left now finds itself?

Creativity and a whole way of life

Williams told us that what is at stake in the arguments for socialism is the nature of a whole way of life, and human aspirations for experiences of self-determination, learning, and relationship, and not narrowly economic or political goals. He was able, in company with other writers of the New Left, to revitalise socialist thinking through drawing on a deeper register of meanings and understandings than came from conventional socialist discourse, whether Labourist, Fabian, or Leninist. Williams believed that the deepest understanding of a way of life was to be found in its imaginative explorations - in novels, plays, cultural criticism - rather than in its formal political writings, and this is what brought a wider audience to his writings. To fashion a critique of the current order, we need to return to his imaginative modes of understanding.

For Williams, the attainment of material prosperity was an unqualified gain. He would have welcomed the fact that major regions of the former 'third world', such as China and India, are now making progress towards enhanced living standards. Although strongly committed to ecological responsibility, and critical of current versions of 'growth', in *Towards 2000* Williams rejected the idea that the poorest countries should be denied the possibility of industrialisation to meet their own needs. He argued for solutions to these problems in terms of global equity, and a redefinition of economic purpose. He believed that material prosperity should be a means to fulfilling, humanly connected lives, and not an end in itself. How can we imagine what these fulfilling lives might consist of, aside from material consumption?

Williams's conception of the core value of 'creativity' included dimensions of work, learning, and decision-making. A good life would be one in which work made use of human faculties; in which education would encourage the development of a variety of capacities; and where people would share in decision making in the public sphere. The socialist movement was the cradle for the advance of these ideas - in Williams's view democracy itself would not have been achieved without working class agency, and the idea of creativity as a measure of the quality of labour gained its currency through socialist thinking. But it may be that these conceptions can no longer depend

on their historical incubator, and need to be thought of as aspirations relevant to all citizens equally.

Democratic processes
The political system, and its deficits, are fundamental to the facilitation or obstruction of such advances. Williams gave great emphasis to the limitations of the British constitutional system, and to its antipathy to democratic life. Without information, deliberation, and procedures for shared decision-making, there can be no progress. This is true at the level of workplace, locality, party, national government, and indeed internationally as writers on global democracy such as David Held have argued.

Thus Williams's insistence on the need for constitutional reforms remains valid. Proposals for a more democratic system, advanced by him and by Charter 88 - through local devolution, fixed-term parliaments, proportional representation, a representative second chamber, and greater power for both Houses of Parliament over the executive - are key to creating space for a more open political life. The symbiotic alliance between state and capital, now maintained by secretive negotiation and lobbying, can only be challenged if the central state is made to devolve some of its powers. In a more democratic and devolved state, different communities of interest and value would gain a stronger voice. New Labour's initial promise on constitutional questions, advanced at first through devolution and the London Mayoralty, etc, has not been fulfilled. It now seems that in Britain, neo-liberalism and a strong centralised state now sustain each other, paradox as this may seem.

The claims of democratic processes need to extend more widely than the formal constitutional system. Individuals need rights of consultation and participation in the workplace. As Williams pointed out, in the health and education services the rights of professional employees to share in the determination of working processes were once taken for granted, though these have now been reduced by managerialist reforms. Here there is some room for manoeuvre, even within the terrain of New Labour. I argued in *Soundings* 26 (Spring 2004) that procedures of audit and inspection could be re-configured to allow service-users, employees and local citizens to participate in the evaluation and improvement of public services, with the support of specialist advisers. The 'stakeholder' concept for the co-determination of corporations, advocated by Will Hutton as a means to a socially-responsible capitalism, should be part of a democratic programme. (Hutton thought that the governance system of British business in which only the interests of mobile shareholders had legal weight gave rise to a damaging 'short-termism' in corporate decision-making.) Unexpectedly, New Labour has given weight to a 'stakeholder' conception of collective 'voice' - against the grain of its customary preference for the right of customer 'exit' - in some parts of the reformed public sector, for example in the constitution of Foundational Trust hospitals. However these democratic initiatives take place in such a marketised climate that they will have an uphill struggle to make an impact.

Communication, education and culture
In the years since Williams wrote, conflicts have continued between the different forces and principles underlying communication systems. On the one hand, the power of commercial media corporations, such as News International, have grown, and the latter's newspapers, together with the *Daily Mail*, has exercised a corrupting influence

on New Labour. The weakening of terrestrial television in competition with commercial satellite providers is having the effect of delivering up large audiences to programmes permeated by the ideology of global markets. International sportspersons have become standard- or logo- bearers for a way of life in which brands, celebrity, and millionaire rewards become the objects of desire, and sports clubs become the property of the corporate rich. A globalised system in which 'winners take all' means that everyone else has less.

On the other hand, public service broadcasting has survived as a powerful institutional form, despite political threats to its autonomy and competition for its market-share, and continues to be held in high public regard. The growth of ever-larger reading publics, and committed audience communities of many kinds (for theatre, rock, art, music et al), as a consequence of extended education, greater resources, and indeed longer active life-spans, expands the social base for communication, which neither state nor corporations are able wholly to control. The growth of the Internet is a new and extraordinary force, offering enormous opportunities for citizens to inform themselves. This must be deemed an advance within any democratic conception of culture. And even though much of the time one is aware of the degrading role of commercial media on political life, there remain many competing national newspapers and television channels, and one cannot say that political leaders and their decisions in Britain are protected from criticism. The Blair government initially responded positively to the demand for more information, via the Freedom of Information Act and the use of the internet, though its ambivalence about this has become increasingly evident. The recent use of committees of inquiry to formulate policies (on Pensions, the Environment, Transport, Town Planning, etc) has been a step back in the right direction from 'sofa government', or what Williams described as the methods of a court, whatever one may think of the policies proposed in each case. In the field of communication and culture, in part because of the work of Williams and others in insisting that they are critical to an informed democracy, a vigorous struggle between different ideologies and systems continues unresolved.

In education, to which Williams also attached great importance, the outcomes of development are also ambiguous. On the one hand, more citizens are being educated, for longer. On the other hand, educational systems are being remodelled in instrumental and behaviourist ways, giving priority to the needs of the labour market, and to the construction of individualist mentalities, over more intrinsic conceptions of educational purpose. Attention to relationships between teachers and learners, or delight in fields of study, are diminished by the pressures on schools and universities to compete, on criteria which often have little to do with authentic education. This is one area where Williams may have been perceptive in his forecast of twenty-five years of conflicts and setbacks. However these may yet not prevent an eventual progress towards cultural democracy.

The sphere of care and the rise of human services

A positive development in recent decades, anticipated by Williams, has been the emergence of care through the life-cycle as an expanding field of work, and as the focus of new kinds of understanding. This is partly a reflection of changing gender relations, following on women's majority entry into education and paid work. Just as an earlier radical vocabulary drew on the actual experience of labour in fields, workshops, mines and schools, so a new vocabulary of emotional and relational needs

has been emerging from the experiences of families, hospitals, clinics, nurseries, and universities, enlarging understanding of the needs of bodies, minds and feelings.[9] New Labour's commitment to the goal of a universal child-care service could be a genuine new frontier for the welfare state (though see Priscilla Alderson's article in this issue for a more critical take on New Labour's policies towards children). The well-being of modern societies abundant in commodities depends on the quality of attention they give to people. This is a field where there have been genuine advances in theory and practice since *The Long Revolution.*

The environment

Environmental concerns are vital in themselves, for reasons of collective human self-preservation, as Williams already recognised. But they also call into question the dominant values of consumer societies, which place acquisition and - as Williams wrote - its often 'magical' satisfactions[10], as central to its way of life. The idea that we are part of a system which cannot be infinitely exploited, but which is subject to damage from our own activity, and that resources and objects need to be treated with care, rather than merely used up, is antithetical to consumption as the primary good. Modern ecological and pre-capitalist traditions of thought have in a common respect for time-scales longer than that of a single generation. The moral communities which form themselves around the goals of the protection of the environment - of species, topographies, places of historical value - which are now large and are unusually well-sustained by the media - are civic associations which are transversal to both market and state. They are among many examples of value-based collectivities that need to be part of democratic deliberation.

Alternatives to the present

It has become more difficult in the last two decades than it was when Williams was writing, to see ours as merely one possible social system among others. 'Actually existing capitalism' seems now to hold us intellectually captive nearly as much as 'actually existing socialism' did its people. Williams evoked 'organic' ways of thinking and feeling, as antitheses to the instrumentalism and individualism which characterised capitalism as a way of life. This was the significance of the 'Culture and Society' tradition in his thought. As someone deeply influenced by Marxism, and by collectivist working class movements, Williams saw capitalism to be a connected and dynamic system, and was not afraid to refer to it by its name.

Thatcherism attacked many pre- or non-capitalist institutions and traditions in British society as well as the collectivism of the working class. She detested the 'class compromise' which she thought paternalist Tory and Whig traditions had made with socialism, and sought to sweep it away. Thatcher's was a truly bourgeois revolution - a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie as Simon Jenkins has put it [11] - with small allegiance

[9] The growing importance of human services to the definition of well-being has been a point of linkage between psychoanalytic thought and social issues. Raymond Williams rejected what he saw as the individualism of Freud's view of human nature, though he also noted the radically social nature of his understanding of identity-formation in early family relationships and its potential. The development of psychoanalysis since Freud, especially in the 'object relations' ideas first formulated by Klein and others during the early years of the welfare state, has emphasised this 'social' conception, and made it a resource for progressive thought.

[10] Raymond Williams 'Advertising: the Magic System', reprinted in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (1980).

[11] In *Thatcher and Sons: A Revolution in Three Acts*. (2006).

to any non-capitalist residues. This regime was insistent that ‘there could be no alternative’ to its own conception of the future.

The West’s cold war victory and the collapse of Soviet Communism in 1989 gave force to this one-dimensional view. Hope for the redemption of the flawed socialist states, which Gorbachev’s reforms had inspired, disappeared; a system which could on occasion provide a counterweight to the dominant world order (in the role of the South African Communist Party for example) was ended; and there was a loss of interest in Marxist ideas.

We can most valuably take from Raymond Williams the idea of a ‘whole way of life’ as potentially subject to continuous learning and remaking over time. His conception of socialism as universal human creativity and agency, based in co-operative and democratic social relationships, transcends its historical origin in the experience of industrial labour. The possibilities which Williams identified in *The Long Revolution* and in *Towards 2000* remain valid starting points for the renewal of the socialist project today.

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