Re-Reading Rick Turner in the New South Africa

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Re-reading Rick Turner in the New South Africa

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Abstract

Using the writings of the assassinated South African political philosopher Rick Turner, this article provides a critique of South Africa ten years after the end of apartheid. Influenced by both Western Marxism and utopian thinking, Turner developed a model of democratic socialism which offered a vision of a 'new South Africa'. This was countered by the ideology of the market and, later, by the force of the 'end of history' thesis. The article argues that inequalities continue in South Africa because the promise of Western Marxism was squeezed out by the convergence of communist political ideology and capitalist modernization.

Keywords: *apartheid, capitalism, communism, democratic socialism, Marxism, political theory, political transformation, Richard Turner, South Africa, utopian thinking*

Ten years after South Africa's transition, the mood of the country is one of resignation rather than celebration. Although the rand, when measured against the dollar, is said to be the best performing currency in the world,[1] the country's rate of unemployment is 36 per cent,[2] crime remains worrisome,[3] and the HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to devastate all communities, especially the poor.[4]

A great deal of ink has been spent by policy pundits and others in analysing South Africa's progress since apartheid ended. Much of it is descriptive rather than penetrating. More reflective commentary has asked searching questions such as 'What keeps us together while everything else is pulling us apart?'[5] Except where necessary, this article does not concern itself with such matters. Our objective, rather, is 'to search out models that are simpler and stronger than any we are familiar with in our own time'.[6] Ironically, we do this by looking deep into the belly of the old South Africa in order to retrieve the life, the thoughts and especially the politics of Richard Turner.

Rick Turner (as he was known to all) was an exemplary case of the academic-activist. For this reason alone his work should find a place in a journal such as this, dedicated to the critical tradition of scholarship. But revisiting the life and the brutal death of an individual of integrity and insight serves an additional purpose. It recalls a time when South Africans, notwithstanding the horrors of apartheid, dared to dream of a radically different future – in these pages we frequently contrast this 'dare to dream' with the managed reality of the post-apartheid state. Retrieving Rick Turner in this globalized world helps reconnect South African politics to this quest.

We do not intend a full discussion of Turner's work and its place in South Africa's critical tradition.[7] Our primary purpose, rather, is to use Turner's work,

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especially the book, *The Eye of the Needle*[8] – with its compelling subtitle, 'Towards Participatory Democracy in South Africa' – as an optic with which to view the kind of society that has been established in the country since 1994.

A further aim of ours is to make Turner's work known to scholars outside South Africa. Fortunately this is not an especially difficult task. Because Turner was interested in historical universals, his work has implications for polities elsewhere. As the South African political philosopher, Raphael de Kadt noted, Turner 'was concerned with the problems and prospects of freedom on a global scale, and he kept himself extraordinarily well informed of political developments throughout the world. Just as freedom could not be divorced from reason, so could it not be a purely parochial affair'.[9] To demonstrate the latter, we discuss Turner's writings in the light of ideas about democracy, socialism and liberalism that have been developed since he wrote.

The 'particular moment'[10]

We begin with the mundane details of what was to be a short but remarkable life. Richard Turner was born to Londoners on 25 September 1941. Were it not for the Second World War, he would surely have been born in the city of his parents. However, his mother travelled from the Gold Coast (now Ghana) southwards to safety and the good medical facilities of Cape Town for the birth of her only child. His boyhood was spent on a fruit farm, which had been purchased by his parents, outside the university town of Stellenbosch, in what is now South Africa's Western Cape province; it was from here that he went to the St George's Grammar School in Cape Town as a boarder. In 1959, Turner enrolled at the country's oldest university, Cape Town, in the Faculty of Engineering. Eighteen months later he switched to the Faculty of Arts in order to study philosophy. He married Barbara Hubbard (now the British Labour MP, Barbara Follett)[11] in 1963, and almost immediately enrolled at the University of Paris for a doctorate. His thesis, *Quelques implications de la phenomenologie existentielle*, on the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, was supervised by Professor Jean Wahl.

The choice of city and subject, the South African social theorist Tony Morphet writes:

> was an unusual step to take. If [Turner] had continued to follow the conventional pattern for the intellectually gifted South African student he would have proceeded to a British University – probably Oxford or Cambridge. France and existential philosophy were difficult choices for someone who had yet to learn French and who had been trained in the philosophic traditions of empiricism.[12]

Under family pressure Turner returned home in 1966 to manage the fruit farm, but the experience of Paris and his graduate studies had clearly left their mark. Morphet emphasizes the point: 'France represented a new form of life experience'; the experience constituted 'the point of Turner's major life choice'.[13]

What precise form this would take was not readily seen from the outside. After the birth of two children, Turner's marriage collapsed; in addition, his stewardship of the farm was short-lived. With this, he moved closer towards his life choice through a series of temporary posts at a succession of South African universities – his alma mater, Cape Town; the place of his childhood, Stellenbosch; and Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape. In 1970, he took up a permanent post in the department of political science[14] at the University of Natal in the port city of Durban, on the country's eastern seaboard – this was to be the place where he realized his life as a total project.

Readily crossing the divide between the seminar and the shop floor, Rick Turner developed interpretations of South Africa and its politics that were far removed from the stock-in-trade white authoritarian views that marked those Cold War and apartheid times. Within the university his exploratory teaching technique was to galvanize and inspire a generation of students who were ready to challenge prevailing assumptions. Many were to become prominent anti-apartheid activists; some were eventually to take up leading positions in South Africa's first post-apartheid government.

In the same year, 1970, Turner met and subsequently married a young student, Foszia Fisher; in so doing, he contravened three separate laws, which included the notorious Immorality Act which forbade intercourse between different races. It was increasingly clear to all who knew him that other boundaries too were frequently transgressed in his determination to live the philosopher's good life and to understand South Africa. His openness to all views, in particular religion, both Eastern and Western, notwithstanding his own secularism, was typical of the experimental lifestyle of the post-1960s generation. Nevertheless, this experimentation was quite compatible with political discipline and intellectual rigour. Not surprisingly, perhaps, Turner was drawn towards the emerging force of Black Consciousness and its charismatic leader, Steve Biko, then a medical student in the same city.[15] However, Turner's political activity was otherwise directed; he initiated a commission that examined workers' wages and conditions; in so doing, he centrally located himself in the organization of new black trade unions.

The Eye of the Needle is dated to this period, as are many of the writings we use in this article. Some were written for a commission, known by the acronym Spro-cas (for the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society),[16] which had been established by the Christian Institute under the aegis of the influential Afrikaner anti-apartheid activist-Christian, Beyers Naude. His contribution in Spro-cas was seminal in its deliberations on the country's future – *The Eye of the Needle*, in particular, was intended to advance the work of Spro-cas. However, intervention by the apartheid state prohibited the further development of this project. The Christian Institute and Spro-cas were banned; so too was Turner, together with seven student leaders.

With the 'Durban Moment' over, Turner clandestinely advised trade unions, while the journal he founded, the influential *South African Labour Bulletin*, continued to appear, as it does to this day. He also sustained his links with student

groups. But it was illegal for him to teach, publish or even be quoted. He persisted in writing, nonetheless, publishing a range of articles on labour issues under different names including his wife's and those of his colleagues, and his role as a defence witness during a 1975–6 political trial brought his name into the public domain. His original, unpublished philosophical work, which we scarcely touch on in this article, was also written during this period.

In 1976, Turner was awarded a Humboldt Fellowship, but the apartheid government refused him permission to travel to Germany to take it up. Just after midnight on 8 January 1978, two short months before the banning order was due to expire, Rick Turner was shot through a window in his home – he died in the presence of his two children, Jann (then aged 13) and Kim (nine). The killer has never been found: although South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission did investigate the assassination, it was unable to uncover any hard evidence. Suspicion did fall on the security police in Durban[17] – however, as Tony Morphet has written: '[t]he man's name is unimportant. The reasons for . . . [the] . . . death are clear to all'.[18]

Utopian thinking

By presenting a series of utopian possibilities for the country, Turner's writing provided a crucial intervention in the bleak politics of the early 1970s. Not only did he provide a moral justification for democratic socialism, the alternative system he championed, he also offered practical ideas on the political and economic institutions that would be required to build such a system in what he called 'a new South Africa'.[19]

Following the logic of utopian thinking, Turner's work is quite distinctive from two important trends at the time: on the one hand, mainstream South African political scientists were preoccupied with the possibility of reforming, to a greater or lesser extent, apartheid's discriminatory political institutions;[20] on the other hand, the traditional left, many of whom were influenced by the orthodoxy of the South African Communist Party, were providing a purely quantitative critique of capitalism. While Turner approved of the latter, he noted that it failed to come to grips with the deeper distortions of both apartheid and capitalism. In a piece entitled 'The Relevance of Contemporary Radical Thought' Turner wrote: 'the "Old Left" criticised capitalism largely on the grounds that it leads to an unfair distribution of wealth and an inefficient use of productive resources. On the whole it accepted the capitalist human model of fulfilment through the consumption and possession of material goods'.[21]

For Turner the liberation of society involves more than the just distribution of goods and services; it includes changing values and forms of life as well. The two areas he focused on are work relations and political community. Turner believed, firstly, that work should become the avenue for the expression of human capacities rather than just a means of acquiring material goods, and, secondly, that

individuals should live in a political community in which they take pleasure in the activities and achievements of their fellow citizens instead of treating them solely as instruments for their own advancement.[22]

A range of radical theorists, in particular, Rousseau, Marx, Sartre, and Marcuse, influenced both Turner's questions and his technique. Their cumulative influences came through in various guises but, specifically, in his questioning of the so-called 'naturalness' of the major institutions of social life. Turner focused on the problem of 'common-sense thinking' – the widespread tendency to view the various social institutions of modern life as permanent and hence unalterable. The flaw in this position, he pointed out, is clearly evident in the disappearance of a variety of social institutions which were all taken for granted in their day: these include cannibalism, slavery, polygamy, aristocracy, and divine rule. Given this, Turner suggested that his readers should be wary of adopting a similar attitude to current institutions such as the private ownership of the means of production, the education system, war and racial domination.[23]

The acceptance of these institutions as unalterable features of our social landscape, he argued, occurs through varied and powerful socialization processes. Dominant values are internalized through forms of discipline in the family and school, through the media and advertising, and through varieties of social interaction; as a result, both dominated and dominator come to accept the system and their roles within it. However odd it now appears, the race-based system of power known as apartheid appeared normal to most Whites in South Africa. A particular kind of logic made this assumed form of superiority almost common-sensical: in those days most Blacks appeared in subservient roles, were far less educated, and were less articulate in either of the official languages, English and Afrikaans.[24] The same kind of reified conceptions of inferiority were applied at the time to women, in the old South Africa and across the globe. It was 'common sense' to let women do the cooking, cleaning, and child-rearing so that men could play leading roles in academic and political life.[25]

Perhaps the most far-reaching 'naturalization' of our time is that of capitalist market relations. Following Marx and later Sartre in his *Critique of dialectical reason*,[26] Turner argued that the profit motive, far from being a natural tendency, is the product of an intensive socialization. Indeed the capitalist is not even moved by the need to consume; making money is his dominant aim. Of course the profit system depends on a mass of citizens motivated by the overarching desire to consume, which is a result of their exposure to the mass communication media and advertising, as well as peer group pressure.[27]

These processes have significant political effects. Not only does the commercialization of society restrict the forms of social expression; it limits autonomy. Individuals lose their capacity to evaluate themselves and, more importantly, to make themselves in their own ways. At the base of Turner's thinking is the Sartrean theme of transcendence – the ability to stand back from prescribed social roles, evaluate them and, at least potentially, to go beyond them. Once we have lost this capacity, we have lost the essence of what it means to be human.[28]

The clue to resolving the dichotomy between the hope registered in the idea of utopian thinking and the promise of a new world lies in the role played by political institutions. At the heart of Turner's political programme, and the institutions that would drive it, lies a specific ideal of autonomy – the facilitation of opportunities for individuals to run their own lives in a context of maximum individual freedom. Turner stated:

> The essential problem is this: How can we design a set of institutions that will give all individuals power over their own lives without permitting them to exercise power over other people? How can we design political institutions that will give people the maximum freedom to choose what to do with their own lives?[29]

But for Turner, we should note, freedom is more than the absence of intentional interference from the authority of the state; it also includes freedom from humanly created social constraints, which are often the unintended effects of individuals' 'free' actions. This idea, explored at length by Sartre,[30] originated with Marx, who noted that capitalism creates the illusion that because people in a market society are unconstrained by direct social forces, they are absolutely free: 'Thus, in imagination, individuals seem freer under the dominance of the bourgeoisie than before, because their conditions of life seem accidental: in reality, of course, they are less free, because they are more subject to the violence of things'.[31]

Turner showed the importance of this by referring to an example drawn from the political discourse of his time, which is still relevant. Free market ideology is contradicted continually by the constraints of the market itself: competitive pricing, changing capital flows, and many other social and economic variables. Faced with these pressures, business people are at least partially honest when they say, as often happens in the new South Africa, that there is no alternative but to retrench workers.[32]

Notwithstanding the efforts of mainstream economists and other policy pundits to portray the free market as the fundamental rational basis of social life, the market is by no means the realization of the natural impulses of humanity. Indeed, the market is a historically developed social institution that is kept in place by millions of individual choices. As with all social institutions, it distributes freedom and coercion in specific ways; in the case of the market, the gains and losses are decidedly unequal. As Turner pointed out: 'the limitations imposed on the capitalist by a slump cannot be meaningful compared with the limits placed on the workers' freedom of action when they are unemployed'.[33] Thus Turner suggested that individuals would enjoy more freedom if the unfettered market was replaced by at least a partially planned system.

Moving towards a society in which freedom is maximized entails radical democratization at both the level of the economy and of the state and this, as we have seen, begins with looking beyond the immediacy of social life. Turner examined apartheid South Africa in these very terms.

The end of history

Before turning to aspects of Turner's thinking on South Africa, it is well to anticipate the rejoinder that Turner's philosophical ideas are antiquated. To put it directly, it is claimed that the only feasible future is one governed by the limited democracy characteristic of the advanced industrial states in a global context which is determined by market forces; in short, Francis Fukuyama's 'end-of-history' thesis.[34] It is important to note that Fukuyama does not mean that history literally has come to an end – elections, coups, even revolutions continue – but he argues that an alternative to liberal capitalism is inconceivable. Notwithstanding the popular and instrumental appeal of Fukuyama's ideas, both in post-apartheid South Africa and elsewhere, they should not escape the critical evaluation of the tradition in which Turner worked, and on three counts.

Firstly, there are the lessons of intellectual history, specifically the failures of previous versions of the end-of-history thesis – the end-of-ideology thesis[35] and the end of class.[36] Secondly, the problems and potential discontents of contemporary liberal capitalism are immense. These include a rapidly deteriorating natural environment and the demonstrable limitations of the free market that have led to unprecedented inequalities in both absolute and relative terms. On the former, the environment, Turner's own work shows an uncanny insight – throughout the book, *The Eye of the Needle*, he returns to the 'limits to growth',[37] as he put it in the idiom of his time. The question of inequality, we have seen, was a core concern of Turner's.

The social effects of the free market, especially its impact on the working class, draws our discussion closer to South Africa. To proceed, we must trace the effect of economic ideas on South African politics. The view that the free market offered opportunities for South Africa to escape apartheid was well established by the time Turner's life ended.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a debate on the future of the country focused on the relationship between capitalism and apartheid. At the centre of this exchange was the so-called Oppenheimer thesis[38] (named after the millionaire businessman, Harry Oppenheimer), which held that apartheid would eventually be brought down by the functional logic of the market – as the contradiction between the free market and racial laws grew, the former would drive out the latter. Proposed as an alternative to the idea of 'national liberation' and its twin, socialism, this was a local version of the development theorist Walt Rostow's classic anti-communist manifesto *Stages of Economic Growth*[39] – especially the famous 'take-off' phase with its removal of structural constraints and the concomitant emergence of an entrepreneurial class. This thesis paid little attention to the situation on the ground, but was politically attractive to South Africa's ruling minority.

As the apartheid government sought to 'reform' the country by the introduction of limited changes to the constitution in the 1980s, concerted efforts to promote a solution premised on economic growth and trickle-down redistribution made the

idea of the market more attractive to elites. To acclaim, one of the icons of the Chicago School of Economics, Milton Friedman, visited South Africa in the mid-1970s. Sponsored by the business community, organizations such as the Free Market Foundation filled the halls of policymakers with the 'reasonableness' of the solutions that the free market was said to offer. As with similar developments elsewhere – the founding of the Heritage Foundation in the United States and the Adam Smith Institute in the United Kingdom are excellent examples – the free market message sought to highlight the 'obviousness' of market solutions for managing political conflict.

Presently, we will return to South Africa, but for the moment we continue our analysis of Fukuyama's idea of the end of history.

Perhaps the most important criticism of Fukuyama's thesis for those who work in the tradition of Turner is the third: Fukuyama offers no rigorous argument at a theoretical level for the claim that history, qualitatively speaking, has ceased. Doing so would mean showing that liberal capitalism possesses the resources to resolve its contradictions, some of which we have already discussed. This is something that neither Fukuyama nor his followers have demonstrated. Clearly, then, the radical democratic project has not lost its relevance. Indeed, recent events suggest that cracks in the liberal capitalist system are beginning to appear.

This evidence indicates an increase in the tempo of historical change, together with the rise of new political and social discontents; these developments, we believe, would not have escaped Turner's gaze. New social movements – either in the guise of anti-globalization or directed towards single-purpose issues like land, have generated the hope that 'another world is possible' – to use the slogan of the World Social Forum

Participatory democracy

Based on the method of utopian thinking and the force of his radical critique, Turner advanced the idea of 'participatory democracy' as the solution to South Africa's mounting woes. Because this idea is crucial to any understanding of Turner's philosophy and his politics, and because it is central to our own position, we deal with it in some detail.

For Turner, the ideal social system 'required for the satisfaction of human needs must be one that 1) enables individuals to have maximum control over their social and material environment, and 2) encourages them to interact creatively with other people'.[40] As he defined it:

> participatory democracy [is] based on workers' control. The dominance of one particular political interest group – the owners of the means of production – is replaced by an equal competition between a variety of groups who are inter-dependent and whose power is proportionate to the number of members of each group. There is no dictatorship of any one group over any other group.[41]

For this to function effectively, economic democracy is necessary. Workers would meet to decide collectively on wages, work routines and the proportions of profit going to reinvestment versus consumption.[42] A workers' council would appoint the director who would do the day-to-day running of the enterprise.[43]

Turner dealt with possible criticisms of this programme through his methodology of refuting the idea of 'common sense'. So the business community often argued that workers lack the competence to understand economics adequately or, more shrewdly, that workers were not interested in management. Against this, Turner argued, along with other radical theorists,[44] that worker passivity is the result of the oligarchical character of social institutions in capitalist society, which provides few avenues for worker participation; in other words, were workers given the chance, they would, firstly, take an interest in management and develop the requisite skills, and, secondly, they would acquire genuine concern for other workers, and this would lay the basis for a caring political community.

The Eye of the Needle, in particular, contains detailed discussions of key economic aspects of participatory democracy – the idea of the free market again providing a foil for many of Turner's arguments. Some of the answers presented by Turner are close to the more fully developed theory of market socialism subsequently developed by thinkers such as John Roemer,[45] in which the means of production are publicly owned and the allocation of resources is determined by competition between democratic enterprises. So, for instance, Turner considers the possible negative effects of a free market of worker-controlled enterprises. These include the tendency towards economic centralization and the unequal size of enterprises because some businesses invariably have greater success than others; externalities such as pollution; the problem of uneven growth and inflation; and recessionary trends due to overproduction in different sectors.[46] How, he asks, is one to decide to allocate both industries and jobs and to do this in ways that respect workers' autonomy?[47] As Turner put it:

> each individual enterprise should retain some of its profits for purposes of technological innovation and expansion but should also contribute to a central fund out of which major new investments could be made. This would enable the central authority to maintain regionally balanced development and also to keep the rate of investment at the level required for full employment.[48]

Despite this attention to detail, *The Eye of the Needle* was never intended to be a fully fledged theory of democratic socialism. Nevertheless, it remains a nuanced and insightful work. But how has it, and Turner's political writing, survived the passage of time?

Perhaps the most powerful criticism of his proposals is the claim that political participation is unnecessary to lead a fulfilled life, a point made by the leading liberal political philosopher of the 20th century, John Rawls.[49] According to Rawls, an individual can achieve self-realization by acting in accordance with the principles of justice that regulate the major social, economic and political insti-

tutions. It is possible, therefore, to be both a just and a fulfilled person without being politically active. To require, then, that all should participate in politics is to discriminate against those who hold different conceptions of the good life and indeed undermines the very autonomy that participation is supposed to bring about.

How would Turner have responded?

Since Turner argued that collective participation in the rational running of a society is essential to avoid being subject to unconstrained social forces, we believe he would not have accepted Rawls's position. Participation is a special kind of good. Without it, domination is inevitable, especially in a society such as apartheid South Africa. Representative democracy alone, as we shall see, is insufficient because it leads to a position in which leading political and economic figures acquire disproportionate influence because of the passivity of the majority of the population. This situation continues to confront society – indeed, it has arguably worsened in the quarter-century since Turner died. Declining rates of electoral participation in advanced states are certainly an index of this trend.

Note that we have offered an instrumental defence of participatory democracy, not an intrinsic one. Such a defence does not imply that participation in politics is the highest end of life. Given, however, Turner's intellectual heritage and political commitment, we believe he would have wanted to maintain the intrinsic justification as well.

Recent writing suggests that Turner's programme for democratic socialism faces a further problem. Some liberal philosophers have expressed doubt about the desirability of universalizing workers' control. For example, Kymlicka and Arneson[50] question the idea that every worker is interested in the decision-making processes of the enterprise. They suggest, instead, that workers might be content to receive a reasonable wage with the sole purpose of devoting their time to personal pursuits. A counter-argument is that spending eight hours a day on activities that do not express or develop one's capacities is essentially undesirable; anyone willing to treat themselves, their capacities and their personality as a mere instrument for a good wage cannot be leading a fulfilled life.

On the other hand, the question of whether a person should be compelled to do creative rather than routine work is not something that exercised Turner's mind. All we can say in his absence is that a commitment to Sartrean freedom is not compatible with such a solution. It is arguable that once the possibilities for creative and more democratically organized work increase, most workers would seek to develop their full potential in the workplace. A similar logic might apply to workers' willingness to participate in decision-making. However, this issue is somewhat trickier, since it is not obvious that someone who does creative work and has no interest in management can be said to live a less than full life.

The new South Africa

Turner's carefully reasoned arguments on the linkages between freedom, democracy and socialism formed the overall framework in terms of which he evaluated the South African political situation. Despite its being an indispensable critical tool for 'analysing existing social reality',[51] he was under no illusion that his radical programme would be realized in the immediate future. As he stated: 'a model of an ideal society must remain a relatively distant hope'.[52] Nevertheless, it is interesting to speculate on just what he would have made of the new South Africa. One thing, however, appears likely – as the labour lawyer, Halton Cheadle puts it, 'he would have sharpened debates',[53] if not directly changed the country's politics.

Clearly, Turner would have considered the ending of race-based politics in South Africa as a victory. As he wrote, 'whites, as well as blacks are victims of the . . . [apartheid] . . . social structure'.[54] Surely, too, Turner would have smiled upon South Africa's new constitution. And because he was so attuned to everyday struggles for liberation, he would, surely, have been delighted by the progressive judgements on gender and other social questions made by South Africa's constitutional court. But we believe the country's inability to adequately confront two issues, inequality and the absence of a radical form of democracy, would have profoundly troubled him.

However we judge the new South Africa, the central issue remains the question of white wealth and black poverty or, as South Africa's president, Thabo Mbeki, has famously put the point, 'South Africa is two nations divided by poverty'.[55] Tragically, the overall pattern of income distribution remains as it was when Turner wrote that 'gross inequalities' cause 'political instability'.[56] Why?

A full ten years after apartheid's ending, the issue of wealth distribution remains captive to the idea that free markets can efficiently and effectively resolve the redistribution dilemma and simultaneously break down the political divide. The free market, as we have already noted, has long preoccupied debate on the country's future. If there was initial resistance to the idea as South Africa's transition started, this was overcome during the late 1980s by a rash of business-sponsored scenario-building exercises.[57]

The object of these was to alter the paradigm through which decision-makers, in business and in politics, saw the country's future. This succeeded in consolidating the idea that there was no alternative to free market-driven globalization, thus forcing the African National Congress (ANC) to retreat from socialism. Within the framework of a negotiated and common future, innumerable scenario-building exercises pointed out that future economic policy for South Africa should be grounded in social relations mediated by 'trust' and 'consensus'.

The experience with scenario-building led to contrived debates over redistribution because they took place within carefully constructed parameters and were set within the language of technical control. By playing upon political stereotypes, these scenarios sought to convince so-called 'populists' that their

economic plans were unworkable, whilst at the same time reassuring the country's Whites that South Africa was not about to capitulate to the demands of radical socialists. Scenario-building entailed 'exercises in reassuring the hysterical about the intentions of the non-existent', as one scholar described them.[58]

Closer scrutiny reveals that many issues in the transition were less successfully resolved than mainstream analysts claim. In essence, apartheid was ended by a series of deals. The latter were guaranteed by what the anthropologist, Robert Thornton, called 'the resilience of administrative practices';[59] these enabled South Africa's new government to implement market-driven economic policies relatively effortlessly.[60] Put differently, the 'reasonableness' of market solutions and the predictability offered by a dependable administration permitted more continuity than change, despite the fact that the rhetoric upon which apartheid's ending was premised promised much more. South Africa's political settlement meant the continuation of the highly stratified economic order but with an important addition: the emergence of a new Black elite with lucrative options both in and outside the state.[61] Together these consigned the elimination of poverty and the reduction of inequality to a decidedly second place.

This is the very outcome that Rick Turner was apprehensive of when he wrote: 'a situation in which merely removing the apartheid brakes on mobility and ending racial discrimination will not fundamentally alter the position of the black people of South Africa. A real change can be brought about only by a fundamental redistribution of wealth and power'.[62] A recent commentator has put the issue cogently: 'poverty is the defining characteristic of South Africa, and has clear racial, gender and spatial dimensions'.[63]

If this is, indeed, the state of play in the new South Africa, the report card shows that neither the ruling ANC nor the official opposition, the Democratic Alliance (DA), have grasped the nettle of redistribution. While the ANC is rhetorically committed to alleviating poverty and equalizing wealth – indeed, to pursuing the ideals set out by Turner – it has palpably failed to implement the macroeconomic policies that would realize them. If anything, its efforts have exacerbated the class divide by redistribution towards a tiny Black elite. The DA, notwithstanding its eventual embrace of a universal franchise, has simply failed to make the same kind of progress in its economic thinking.

On the issue of democracy in the new South Africa, Turner rejected both parliamentary democracy and what he called 'the soviet model'.[64] His goal was to move parliamentary government beyond the limits of electoral and representative politics because both inevitably centralize political power and take decision-making out of the 'effective control of the people'.[65] Traversing ground that is quite recognizable in the political science of his time, he focused on both the political party and the 'party machine' in order to suggest how the political rank and file are alienated from the policy-making process. To stem this undemocratic drift, he searched for 'additional centres of power which can be used by the people to exert their control over the central body'.[66] Not surprisingly, these matters returned him to the factory floor – to the question of workers' control.

His additional suggestion of extra-legal and extra-parliamentary means[67] to bring change, and to bolster radical democracy, brings the debate on South Africa's future back to the 'struggle politics' of the 1980s. This is when community politics and national politics fused in an insurrection, spearheaded by the extra-parliamentary United Democratic Front (UDF).[68] The irony of the result would surely not have been lost on Turner: if militancy on the country's streets helped to bring apartheid to its knees, why was the radical project, at the moment of triumph ten years ago, abandoned for 'the hedge of technical jargon',[69] the political deal, and the free market?

Towards a new radical politics?

In significant ways the path to these outcomes was facilitated as much by the fact that the collapse of apartheid coincided with the ending of the Cold War and the triumph of capital. The harmonization of these with the force of Fukuyama's 'end-of-history' thesis seemed to preclude any possibility that the post-apartheid state could exercise agency in the increasingly powerful global economy. But does this explain why, to quote the important words of the South African intellectual historian Andrew Nash, 'leading figures of . . . [Turner's] . . . generation . . . [and some of his students] . . . capitulated almost without exception to the imperatives of the market and the crudest forms of bourgeois ideology?'[70]

The answer seems clear to us. The promise of the Western Marxist tradition was squeezed out by the convergence of communist political ideology and capitalist modernization. Thus, far from the new South Africa's embrace of the free market model in the context of liberal democracy being a vindication of Turner's thought and life, it represented the extirpation of his attempt to find an authentic third way between capitalism and communism.

The convergence at the philosophical level was mirrored in the practice of South Africa's political elites. This began with a tacit acceptance of the need for continuity in the country, rather than of change, notwithstanding the destruction that apartheid had wrought. But this continuity, which was hailed as a miracle, carried forward the gross disparities in income and wealth along a fault line determined, as in most things in South Africa, by race. Certainly the country's political accommodation has been judged as remarkably successful; evidence for this has come from the high praise that Western elites have showered on the South African government for its custodianship of the country's economy.

Are South Africa's people just to give up and accept the continued hold that the 'end-of-history' thesis has on their country? We believe that Rick Turner would have advised them not to do so. Surely he would have been determined to continue the struggle for participatory democracy in South Africa?

Hence if, as Andrew Nash had recently claimed, the moment of Western Marxism has passed, this is not to be celebrated. Its loss has closed off further possibilities towards more radical forms of democracy that Turner's work

represented. Given the long argument we have presented, this, however, should not mean the end of the emancipatory project. But a new radical political philosophy would have to take on board the many developments in the field since Turner's death, some of which we have alluded to.

Needless to say, not only has change occurred at the level of ideas; history itself, notwithstanding Fukuyama's thesis, has moved in many interesting and surprising directions. There is ample evidence, both in South Africa[71] and elsewhere, that a new politics is on the move. Global anti-capitalism and the limits of national politics have opened up space for new forms of political engagement.[72] These shifts will surely influence the content of a new and radical political philosophy in ways that Turner could not have foreseen. For example, whatever the strengths of the Western Marxist tradition, one of its weaknesses, inherited from Marx, has been an inadequate analysis of state power, especially with regard to questions of accountability, democracy and human rights.

Rick Turner, like any Western Marxist philosopher, focused more on problems of domination in the factory and the market than on how to achieve a truly participatory political system that respects as fully as possible the liberty of all citizens. Given both his commitment to the maximization of freedom and his lack of dogmatism, Turner would surely have responded positively to important new work in democratic theory which explores the role of deliberation in promoting consensus amongst autonomous individuals.[73]

This article has sought to draw attention to an exceptional life, to excavate near-lost political philosophy and to emphasize the relevance of radical politics in our time. In doing so, it has mimicked Rick Turner's critique of dominant South African values, many of which continue a full 25 years after he faced the assassin's gun.

Notes

1 'The Runaway Rand', *Financial Mail* (Johannesburg), 14 November 2003.
2 David Everatt, 'The Politics of Poverty', in David Everatt and Vincent Maphai (eds) *The Real State of the Nation. South Africa after 1990s*, *Development Update* (special edition), 4(3), 2003, p78.
3 On this issue, see 'Cold Cradle of Crime', *Financial Mail* (Johannesburg), 14 March 2003.
4 On this issue, see Helen Epstein, 'AIDS in South Africa: The Invisible Cure', *New York Review of Books*, 50(12), 17 July 2003, pp44–9.
5 David Chidester, Phillip Dexter and Wilmot James (eds), *What Holds Us Together: Social Cohesion in South Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2003), and Everatt and Maphai, *Real State*.
6 Tony Morphet, 'Why we Need Richard Turner', *South African Outlook*, 108, 1978, p90.
7 Fortunately, however, an impressive recent study points in this direction. See Andrew Nash, *The Dialectical Tradition in South Africa* (unpublished PhD thesis presented to the Department of Political Studies, University of Cape Town, 2000).
8 Richard Turner, *The Eye of the Needle. Towards Participatory Democracy in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1980).
9 Raphael de Kadt, 'Why we Need Richard Turner', *South African Outlook*, 108, 1978, p89.

10 This subtitle, like this section of the article, is inspired by Tony Morphet's very fine 'Biographical Introduction' in Turner, *Eye*, ppvii–xxxiv.
11 See 'Barbara Follett, MP for Stevenage', http://www.barbara-follett.org.uk/biograpghy.index.html
12 Morphet, 'Biographical Introduction', pxiv.
13 Morphet, 'Biographical Introduction', pxv.
14 It seems plain from his writings, especially his August 1974 open letter to South Africa's parliamentarians, that Turner thought of himself as a 'political scientist'. See his 'Letter to Parliament', *South African Outlook*, 108, 1978, pp84–7.
15 Turner offers insightful views on Black Consciousness in his writings. See Turner, *Eye*, pp85–90 and 122–30.
16 For a summary of this work see Peter Randall, *A Taste of Power. The Final, Co-ordinated Spro-cas Report* (Johannesburg: The Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society, 1973).
17 Telephone interview with Dr John Daniel, former senior researcher on the TRC, 20 November 2003.
18 Morphet, 'Why we Need Richard Turner', p90.
19 Richard Turner, 'In Search of a New South Africa', *Pro Veritate*, 15 September 1970, pp3–7.
20 See, for example, Denis Worrall, *South Africa. Government and Politics* (Pretoria: J. L. van Schaik, 1971).
21 Richard Turner, 'The Relevance of Contemporary Radical Thought', in *Directions of Change in South African Politics* (Johannesburg: Spro-cas Publications), (3), 1971, p76.
22 Turner, *Eye*, p15.
23 Turner, *Eye*, p6.
24 Turner, *Eye*, p4.
25 Turner, *Eye*, p4.
26 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (London: Verso, 1991).
27 Turner, *Eye*, p13.
28 Richard Turner, 'From Rousseau to Sartre' (unpublished manuscript), p5.
29 Turner, *Eye*, p35.
30 Richard Turner, 'Alienation and the Series', (unpublished manuscript), pp8–15, and Sartre, *Critique*, pp122–342.
31 Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (New York: International Publishers, 1981), p84.
32 Turner, *Eye*, pp52–3.
33 Turner, *Eye*, p53.
34 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1992).
35 Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1960).
36 John Westergaard and Henrietta Resler, *Class in a Capitalist Society: A Study of Contemporary Britain* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1975).
37 Turner, *Eye*, p96.
38 See Michael O'Dowd, *South Africa: The Growth Imperative* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1991).
39 W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).
40 Turner, *Eye*, p34.
41 Turner, *Eye*, p62.
42 Turner, *Eye*, p36.
43 Turner, *Eye*, p37.
44 See, for example, Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).
45 John Roemer, 'The Possibility of Market Socialism', in David Copp, Jean Hampton and John Roemer, *The Idea of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
46 Turner, *Eye*, p55.
47 Turner, *Eye*, p56.
48 Turner, *Eye*, p58.
49 John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p206.
50 Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p188, and Richard Arneson, 'Democratic Rights at National and Workplace Levels', in Copp et al., *Democracy*, pp138ff.

51 Turner, *Eye*, p152.
52 Turner, *Eye*, pp151–2.
53 Halton Cheadle interviewed in 'My Father, Rick Turner', a film by Jann Turner. Broadcast on ETV on 8 January 2003.
54 Turner, *Eye*, p10.
55 Thabo Mbeki, *The Time Has Come* (Cape Town: Tafelberg/Mafube, 1998), p75.
56 Turner, *Eye*, note 8, p82.
57 On this issue see Ian Taylor and Peter Vale, 'South Africa's Transition Revisited: Globalization as Vision and Virtue', *Global Society*, 14(3), 2000, pp399–414.
58 Anthony Butler, *Democracy and Apartheid: Political Theory, Comparative Politics and the Modern South African State* (London: Macmillan, 1998).
59 Robert Thornton, 'The Potential of Boundaries in South Africa: Steps Towards a Theory of the Social Edge', in Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (eds), *Postcolonial Identities in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 1996), p139.
60 There was, of course, a series of steps taken towards this outcome. A recent account of these is to be found in Dennis Davis, 'From the Freedom Charter to the Washington Consensus', in Everatt and Maphai, *Real State*, pp31–48.
61 For a critical view of this process see Phylicia Oppelt, 'Greed Suffocates Ubuntu as the Rising Black Elite plays the Old White Game', *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), 7 December 2003.
62 Turner, 'Radical Thought', p76.
63 Everatt, 'Politics of Poverty', p77.
64 Turner, 'Radical Thought', p81.
65 Turner, 'Radical Thought', p81.
66 Turner, 'Radical Thought', p81.
67 Turner, 'Radical Thought', p82.
68 On the UDF, see Jeremy Seekings, *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983–1991* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1999).
69 Turner, *Eye*, p60.
70 Andrew Nash, 'The Moment of Western Marxism in South Africa', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 19(1), 1999, p66.
71 For evidence of this in South Africa, see David Macdonald, *Environmental Justice in South Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002).
72 See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).
73 See, for example, Joshua Cohen, 'Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy', in Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit (eds), *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).