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Aboriginals, Colonists and Multiculturalism: The Dialectic of Recognition and Social Exclusion in Australian History

Developing Hegel's ideas on the dialectic of recognition and its role in the evolution of civilization, Charles Taylor in a seminal work, *Multiculturalism and the "Politics of Recognition"* (since translated into Italian, French and German), characterized multiculturalism, in which different cultures within a country are recognized and respected, as a new phase in ethical and political development (Taylor and Gutmann, 1992; Taylor, 1994). Australia is unique in modern history in the extent to which it embraced multiculturalism and abandoned nationalism - the commitment to a territorial community the membership of which is defined first and foremost in terms of place of birth. It appears to be a post-nationalist, multicultural society that celebrates its cultural diversity. Far from being social outcasts, immigrants, who are selected for their level of education, have a higher average income than native-born Australians. Australia, therefore, might seem to provide a vision of the future for those countries striving to overcome the exclusionary tendencies of their nationalist heritage.

There were good reasons to promote multiculturalism in Australia. Australia was born racist. At Federation in 1901, Aboriginals were not granted citizenship. They could not vote and were not protected or supported by the state in the same way as other people. In outback Western Australia and Queensland they were sometimes massacred. Australia encouraged immigration, but at that stage, only from Great Britain. A White Australia policy had developed and been made into law. Among those who were admitted, there was discrimination. When it came to employment, Irish Catholics, who were among the early settlers, were discriminated against by the dominant Anglo-Scottish Protestants. With the First World War, there was a general suspicion of people of German descent and Italian immigrants were
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despised. After the Second World War, Australia opened its doors to refugees from all of Europe, but people of non-European descent were excluded. However, being accepted as migrants did not mean acceptance into the national community. Anglo-Scots were the establishment, and they maintained their position. They refused to recognize the educational qualifications of European immigrants. Jews were not admitted into the Melbourne Club, an association for the wealthy establishment. The 'old' Australians defined a status hierarchy of the immigrants, with northern and eastern Europeans granted a higher status than southern Europeans. Aboriginals remained at the bottom.

In 1967 the constitution was amended to grant full citizenship to all Aboriginals. Then, after the Vietnam war, Vietnamese refugees were also admitted to Australia, and this was the death knell of the White Australia policy. Subsequently large numbers of Lebanese, Chinese, Indians and other Asians were also accepted as immigrants, along with a small number of Africans. In the 1980s multiculturalism was promoted as a way to overcome the various forms of exclusion based on ethnicity. Whereas the Australian Labor Party government of 1972 to 1975 was intensely nationalist, the Labor government which gained power in 1983 downplayed nationalism and, along with its neo-liberal economic policies, promoted tolerance for ethnic diversity and vigorously promoted a doctrine of 'multiculturalism'. Particularly among the political left, nationalism was expunged from intellectual life. Those who reverted to nationalist forms of discourse, such as the supporters of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party, were dismissed by the political left as 'red-necks', throw-backs to a past contaminated by racism. At present, metropolitan Australia is 'multicultural', although this way of thinking has not yet fully penetrated rural Australia and a new racist nationalism of the right is being promoted by the Prime Minister, John Howard (Hage, 2003).

Does this mean that multicultural Australia is free of social exclusion? Australia is a far less egalitarian society than it was in the 1970s. In the 1980s and 90s it was transformed from one of the most egalitarian of the OECD countries to one of the least. Some people have prospered, but the middle classes and the poor are now much poorer. This suggests that social exclusion might have become more of a problem, not less. The plight of Aboriginals, the people who have suffered most from social exclusion, highlights what has happened. Despite far greater acknowledgement and respect for Aboriginal culture, this has
not been reflected in their socio-economic position. Their economic base in society has collapsed, unemployment is extremely high and many of their communities have disintegrated under the impact of drug abuse. According to official figures, 23% of Aboriginals are unemployed; but this does not include those involved in the 'work-for-dole' schemes. Such people are obliged to work at least three days a week on 'community projects' for which they receive nothing more than the standard poverty-level unemployment benefit. If these people are also counted, the unemployment rate among Aboriginals is 41%. And, of those who are employed, only 60% are working full-time.

Symptomatic of their economic condition, in 1999 life expectancy of Aboriginals at birth was 56.9 years, compared with 75.2 years for the rest of the population. The death rates for Aborigines aged 35-54 was around 6-8 times higher than for their non-Aboriginal counterparts (AIHW, 1999). This poverty has produced a new wave of racism, particularly among people who have lost economic security and whose hours of work have increased while their real income has declined. Aboriginals are stigmatized as parasites, alcoholics and petty criminals.

While Aboriginals are an extreme case, they are not the only people marginalized within Australia in this way. Immigrants from Islamic countries, mainly Lebanese, are also characterized by high levels of unemployment, and with high crime rates they also are stigmatized. They have been branded by the Premier of New South Wales as a dysfunctional community. Refugees from Islamic countries are treated with extraordinary brutality, and political refugees have been sent back to their countries to face execution. The federal government is running a major campaign to promote fear of Islamic terrorism that will inevitably further marginalize Islamic communities.

How are we to understand this situation? Does it show that Australia still suffers from social exclusion? As noted, the growing disparities in economic fortune within Australia are associated with the rise of neo-liberalism; that is, the deregulation of the market, the privatization of public assets, treating public institutions as business enterprises and dismantling of much of the welfare state. From the perspective of neo-liberalism, the plight of Aboriginals is not social exclusion. With a free market economy controlled by managers, ability and hard work are rewarded. In a society dominated by managers rather than owners of the means of production, anyone can get to the top. From this perspective, those who have lost out with the deregulation of the market
and the dismantling of welfare institutions are getting what they deserve. Even if one does not accept this ideological stance, it could be argued that the plight of Aboriginals is due to neo-liberal economic policies rather than social exclusion. Social exclusion suggests that there is something other than market forces operating to impoverish people. But is this true? It could be argued that the so-called free market itself is inseparable from social exclusion. By generating increasing inequalities, the market inevitably generates inequalities of opportunity between the children of the rich and the poor. To overcome social exclusion, what was required was multiculturalism without neoliberalism. Could the old forms of social exclusion have been eliminated without creating new forms by embracing multiculturalism within a social democratic framework? Would the situation of Aboriginals have improved under these circumstances?

These issues and questions are deeply connected. They highlight the problematic nature of the concept of social exclusion and the impossibility of understanding the phenomenon in abstraction from the complex relations between politics, economics, ideologies and cultures. What we need most is a clearer understanding of the notion of social exclusion and how social exclusion operates.

**Social Exclusion and Social Inclusion**

To begin with, it is necessary to examine the concept of social exclusion. Social exclusion is the obverse of social inclusion. Any social group that recognizes itself as such draws a boundary between its members, the included, and others, the excluded. Families, professions and organizations as well as classes and nations only exist through such boundaries. And within groups there are sub-groups that are to some extent exclusive. Much of social life is taken up with challenges to such boundaries. Most commonly, this is on an individual basis. People strive to gain admission to exclusive groups from which they have hitherto been excluded. But to strive for membership of a group, that is to strive to be included, is to strive to differentiate oneself from others who do not have membership. It is to strive for exclusion. Others strive for more radical boundary changes. They strive to have whole groups admitted. But even this does not eliminate exclusion. There are always other groups who are not to be admitted, and so the
quest for inclusion again is a form of exclusion. Sometimes a more radical strategy is adopted, the strategy of creating new groups which are defined by total inclusion. But when groups claim to strive for total inclusion, they exclude those with rival allegiances. Some of the most violent and bitter wars in history have been fought between rival groups each committed to total inclusion. If this is the case then there is a sense in which social exclusion is not only ubiquitous; it is inescapable.

Exclusion and inclusion also varies greatly in its extent, in rigidity and subtlety, in what follows from being included or excluded, and in the relationships between more broadly and more narrowly defined groups. Exclusion can mean treating people as the enemy, to be killed or enslaved, or it can mean upholding standards that must be met for the exclude to be admitted into the group. It can mean utter contempt towards people regarded as biologically inferior or it can be a mere recognition of limitations, for instance, the lack of educational qualifications required for admission to a craft or profession. Exclusion can be overt or disguised. There can be multiple levels of exclusion. People can be accepted as part of a broader community which defines the most important conditions of existence for people but denied membership to sub-communities which accord special privileges, or their acceptance as part of a broader community might be of little significance with membership of a sub-community entailing enormous privileges. Furthermore, the nature of each group, the criteria of membership and what it means to be a member can be changing. People can struggle to be included in a particular group only to find that membership has lost its significance, and that some other, more exclusive group has gained control over what had been valued.

How can we begin to grasp the forms of social exclusion that have emerged recently in Australia? Should we apply the most powerful existing universal theories, or should these forms be looked upon as unique, requiring a break with earlier theories to allow their uniqueness to be appreciated? There is some justification for taking the latter path. Theories tend to assimilate diversity to universal schemes, or at least, very general schemes. If what has taken place in Australia is different from elsewhere, then to apply existing theories would appear to deny its uniqueness. Furthermore, theories are not innocent when it comes to social exclusion. Theories not only reveal, they also conceal, and outmoded theories are often part of the symbolic structure of in-
clusion and exclusion. The enlightenment theories of society as a social contract along with their ideals of universal liberty, initially designed to undermine the justification for the privileges of the aristocracy and the church, became part of the ideology of the bourgeoisie to justify their exploitation of the working class, while Marx’s ideas, which had brilliantly exposed the role and illusions of the ideology by which the bourgeoisie justified its privileges, in turn became part of the means by which the new managerial class of Eastern Europe defined themselves and disguised their exclusive privileges. It can be expected that existing theories have already been appropriated by various groups within Australia in their struggles to exclude or be included, and their use might further muddy the waters. But we can hardly ignore existing theories and develop totally new theories if only because it is necessary to understand the role of earlier theories in social exclusion.

To obviate this problem and illuminate social exclusion in present day Australia it is necessary to understand Australia historically. This requires a history not only of the forms of inclusion and exclusion, but a history of the ideas sustaining, justifying or opposing these forms, including theories of social inclusion and exclusion. Furthermore, Australian society, as a British colony, can only be understood in relation to the history of European civilization and British culture and the forms of thinking on social relations embodied by it. Such a history is also required to show what is required of a theory to reveal any new dimensions of social exclusion. Fortunately, this is not as difficult to provide as it might seem. Recent work on forms of exclusion is strongly influenced by Hegel’s analysis of the dialectics of recognition, and virtually all theories of exclusion, whether they are neo-Hegelian, Marxist or neo-Nietzschean, take Hegel’s work as their point of departure. Hegel can be taken as a reference point for interpreting both European civilization and Australian history, which then provides the perspective necessary to evaluate recent defences of multiculturalism as necessary to overcome the last bastion of social exclusion.

Theories of Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Australian Aboriginals

Theories of social exclusion have their roots in a culture suffused with Christian thought. The project of social inclusion originated in univer-
sal religions and it is only against this background that exclusion came to be seen as problematic. Until then, people brazenly celebrated their exclusiveness, generally as an aristocracy, the excluded being not only the barbarians surrounding them, but also the people they had conquered and were ruling. The quest for social inclusion was promulgated by Christians in opposition to the exclusions of Rome and Judaism. The Christians called for love of all humanity, even one's enemies, implying that everyone, including the sick and the destitute, should be recognized as equally significant. However, Christianity was affected by its roots in Judaism and Roman civilization; it also upheld the exclusive superiority of the elect. Little wonder that it has been embraced by emperors, from the Roman emperor, Constantine the Great to president of USA, George Bush Junior. It has provided an ideology that could serve not only the unification of empires but legitimation for the privileged position of the ruling class of such empires, and their expansion under such slogans as 'convert or kill'. Nevertheless, while serving this function, Christianity has provided support for those questioning and striving to overcome such privilege and European civilization has been characterized by a tendency to increase the scope and concreteness of the call for inclusion. Critical social theory is the heir of this tradition, although its thoroughly secular exponents seldom acknowledge their paternity. But precisely because of this paternity, such social theory has had a propensity to provide the ideological means to uphold privilege and social exclusion.

The philosopher who most profoundly attempted to account for the emergence of Christianity with its call for total inclusion, and the role this has played in subsequent history, was Hegel. Underlying Hegel's analysis is the thesis that humans only become free, self-conscious subjects conscious of their freedom through their relations to others by which they are recognized as such, and that the forms of these relations have evolved through history towards fuller recognition and actualization of this freedom. The most important impetus for this evolution, that which arouses people's passions and moves them to become agents of history (the cunning of reason), is the struggle for recognition that is only satisfactorily achieved when it is reciprocal (Williams, 1997). The vision of a world in which all people would have their significance recognized was originally the product of a conflict of wills, the outcome of which was subjugation and enslavement rather than destruction of the conquered (Hegel, 1967: 228ff.). The enslaved
became instruments of the will of their conquerors, but in becoming so, recognized the will of their masters. In constant fear of death, they transcended their egocentric perspectives. Working on nature, they came to see a reflection of themselves in the products of their work, and although they did not gain recognition from their masters, they came to know what they wanted – recognition. This led first to stoicism, then to skepticism, and then to an appreciation of the universal in humanity, freedom based on mutual recognition, although in a contorted way. The ‘universal’ was projected onto a transcendental realm. This was Christianity in its early form and as it developed in medieval society (Taylor, 1975: 160). The modern world is characterized by the process of embodying what had been projected onto the transcendental realm into institutions (Hegel, 1971: §482, §483).

The dynamics and ambivalent tendencies of Christian culture have revealed themselves in English history and have been incorporated into Australian society. It was in Britain, in opposition to the French speaking Norman kings, Henry III and Edward I, that ‘nationalism’ (from nasci – be born) first began to emerge in Wales, England, Scotland and then Ireland as a claim for the freedom of a people to determine their own affairs, not because they were conquerors, the traditional basis for claiming recognition, but because of where they were born. This began the struggle against the monarchy, initiated by Simon de Montfort (1208-1265), to establish the rule of law to which everyone is subject, and to develop parliamentary democracy, a struggle that eventually led to the revolutions of the seventeenth century. This was, in Hegel’s terminology, the beginning of the actualization of the Idea of universal freedom recognized as such in the institutions of the state, and it inspired the quest for democratic institutions elsewhere; eventually, around the world. However, this triumph of the people was accompanied by the dispossession of peasants from their land and the creation of a proletariat, the invasion and colonization of North America, the penetration and later the subjugation of India, the invasion of Australia, Africa and New Zealand, and associated with these developments, the concentration of immense wealth by a new ruling class.

At the very moment in which recognition of the significance of all people promulgated by Christianity was being institutionalized, the exclusive, domineering orientation of the British aristocracy was embraced and transmogrified into a more virulent form. What emerged was the development of rampant capitalism and the British Empire,
and legitimating such developments, the social and political philosophy of Hobbes and Locke construing society and government as contracts to preserve life and (in Locke) property (what people had mixed their labour with), economic theory (based on the philosophies of Hobbes and Locke) and the Darwinist conception of nature as evolving through a struggle of all against all. This world-view enabled the British ruling class to represent itself as, simultaneously, bringers of freedom to all (the white man's burden) and, through its successful triumph over the lower classes, primitive peoples (in America, Africa, Australia and New Zealand) and inferior civilizations (India and China), the highest product of economic progress and evolution, the elect chosen by God to realize His plan on Earth (a vision since taken over by the ruling class of USA) (Young, 1985). Australia was colonized and then developed economically and politically as part of the British Empire.

The most important theories of exclusion are those exposing the illusions of equality created by the new British ruling class, and the towering theorist in this regard was of course Marx. However, Marx's views can be taken as a development of Hegel's analysis of how the market in English society, where trade unions had been abolished, generated large scale impoverishment which drove civil society to colonization (Hegel, 1991: §245-§248). Marx's analyses were rooted in Hegel's analysis of the dialectic of labour and the dialectic of recognition; however Marx rejected Hegel's proposed remedy of controlling the market through 'corporations' (trade unions and professional bodies) and the institutions of the state (Houlgate, 1991: 104-119). It is impossible to understand either the past or the present state of Australia without appreciating Marx's central insights, and at the same time the failure of Marx and Marxists to understand under what conditions, trade unions and the state could subordinate the market, as Hegel had proposed. This highlights another failure in Marx's thought, the failure to anticipate the rise and significance of nationalism.

Marx (unlike the Marxists) was not defending an economic theory but offering a critique of political economy, as the subtitle of Capital indicates. His argument, obscured by the determinist general theory of history on which orthodox Marxism is based, is that the supposedly free exchange of commodities in which people participate as free agents is really an emergent system of social relations (and therefore not explicable in terms of the conditions from which it emerged) char-
characterized by unequal power, a system in which most people are dispossessed of the means of production and so are forced into dependence on the operations of the market in a position of extreme weakness, while owners of the means of production (the capitalists) are compelled to invest their wealth as capital to accumulate more capital. If the dispossessed are lucky they can sell their creative potential as labour power to the capitalists, but in the process reproduce the system of social relations that oppresses them. Marx revealed how these relationships are disguised by 'political economy', the science of economics, which presents the economic categories constituting the 'forms of existence' of and social relations within this system as 'natural' and the basis of liberty, disguising their historical specificity and the operations by which most people are disempowered, and these relationships thereby maintained. Revealing the world one-sidedly, these categories are constituents of the market system which, partly through the way its irrational nature is concealed by these categories, must expand both intensively (commodifying more and more aspects of social life) and extensively (extending the market to other countries), continually undermining settled modes of life, concentrating wealth and disempowering and excluding ever larger numbers of people from the benefits of economic development. At the same time he noted how these categories blind people to the dependence of the economy on the processes of nature, to the way states, controlled by those in whose hands wealth is concentrated, operate to support and extend the market, and the way the market, with the support of states, is used to penetrate, dominate and then exploit other societies, extending the market to encompass the entire world. By showing that property relations in a market economy are really social relations, Marx showed that exclusion based on property, that is, economic exclusion, is really social exclusion. Marx predicted that the ruling class of this global market system would become so exclusive and create a system so unstable that it would pave the way for the rest of humanity to overthrow it and create a social order that would be totally inclusive.

Australia was founded to absorb the convicts and destitute generated by Britain's marketised society, to supply Britain's rapidly expanding economy with raw materials, and then to provide markets for British industry. After beginning as a prison colony, Australia developed as a capitalist economy with British legal and political institutions and the commitment entailed by these to upholding rights to life
and, more importantly, property. Occupying any land from which a profit could be generated, the colonists spread quickly, expropriating land and undermining the ecosystems on which the Aboriginal economy had been dependent. To deter resistance, the government attempted to terrorize the Aboriginals, in one case building gibbets (or gallows) to display the bodies of the Aboriginals they had killed (Reynolds, 1987: 33ff.). Survivors were reduced to dependency on the colonists’ economy. The original Aboriginals had impressed the colonists by their nobility and confident manner (Reece, 1974: 11). A few decades later the Aboriginals near settlements had lost their skills, their social organization had disintegrated, and they had become despised beggars addicted to alcohol and tobacco (Reece, 1974: 12ff.). As the colonists spread inland there was large-scale killing of Aboriginals, including a number of massacres (Reynolds, 1982). At least 20,000 Aboriginals were killed (Reynolds, 1987: 189). Later, settlers cleared Aboriginals from their properties by poisoning them with flour containing strychnine.

Some efforts were made to bring to justice people who murdered Aboriginals. Seven perpetrators of a massacre were hanged in 1838, but most colonists were outraged by this and it had little influence on their treatment of Aboriginals (Reece, 1974: ch.4). The Colonial Office in Britain, shocked at the treatment of Aboriginals by colonists, called for the creation of reserves for Aboriginals and in 1848 created pastoral leases in place of freehold title to ensure Aboriginals would have access to their land (Reynolds, 1988: 17). This probably did help some Aboriginals. Christian missionaries sought to convert the Aboriginals and to either develop a separate Aboriginal society or absorb Aboriginals into white society, but with little success. Through murder, massacres, poisoning and diseases of destitution, by 1901 the population of Aboriginals had been reduced by more than 85% to about 100,000.

Since Aboriginals did not cultivate the land, most of the colonists embraced Captain Cook’s claim in 1770 to have taken possession Australia in the name of the King of England on the basis that it was unoccupied (terra nullius), although, after an investigation in 1837, the British government repudiated this (Reynolds, Henry, 1988: 13). In 1838, The Sydney Herald, applying Locke’s philosophy, argued of the Aboriginals, ‘their ownership, their right, was nothing more than that of the Emu or the Kangaroo. They bestowed no labour upon the land and that – and that only – it is which gives property in it.’ (Reece, 1974: 170)
Similarly, in 1844 a leading lawyer in the colony, Richard Windeyer, argued, 'since the Aborigines could not be said to have had either laws or personal property in land when the whites arrived, they could not even claim the rights of a conquered nation (Reece, 1974: 172).'. More broadly it was argued 'that the British settlers, by virtue of their Christianity and their superior civilization, were performing the role to which God and History had destined them: "to go forth and people and till the land."' (Reece, 1974: 172). Later in the century such ideas were reformulated through Darwinian evolutionary theory. Typically, James Barnard argued in 1890 that it had 'become an axiom that, following the law of evolution and the survival of the fittest, the inferior races of mankind must give place to the highest type of man... (Reynolds, 1987: 119).'. Accordingly, the attitude of most colonists was that 'If the blacks were unwilling to conform to the new order and become wage labourers ... they should be placed in institutions ... to be re-educated, or they would have to "go" altogether (Reynolds, 1987: 191f.).' The invasion and destruction of Aboriginal societies, their subsequent impoverishment and decline, and the self-righteousness of the perpetrators, was an outcome almost entirely intelligible through Hegel's and Marx's analyses of the market, political economy and other facets of bourgeois ideology.

**Australian Nationalism and Aboriginal Rights**

With Federation in 1901, most Australians continued to see themselves as an outpost of the British Empire. This attitude dominated until the Second World War. However, inspired by poets, artists, novelists, the occasional bushranger and the labour movement, there was a growing nationalism within Australia. Influenced by Friedrich List, Australians set up tariff barriers to promote the development of a national economy. There followed a series of political and social developments that could not be understood from Marx's perspective, vindicating Hegel against Marx. While retaining a market economy, trade unions and state institutions successfully redistributed income to the working population. A system of wage arbitration was put in place in 1901 and in the famous Harvester judgement of 1907, the principle was formulated that all male workers should be paid at minimum a basic wage sufficient to support a family. The Labour Party gained a majority of
seats federally and in New South Wales and South Australia in 1910, and by mid-1915 Labour held power everywhere except Victoria. Although interrupted by two world wars and the Great Depression, Australia flourished as one of the world’s most affluent and most egalitarian societies, with publicly owned banks, extensive public works to provide the infrastructure for the economy, and its own industries despite pressure from Britain to embrace free trade and confine itself to supplying raw materials to Britain.

Despite these developments, Aboriginals benefited little, at least to begin with. The labour movement in Australia was blatantly racist, in 1905 calling for ‘The cultivation of an Australian sentiment based on the maintenance of racial purity and the development in Australia of an enlightened and self-reliant community (Gollan, 1975: 207).’ Aboriginals were disenfranchised and excluded from social welfare provisions. Massacres continued in northern Australia in the early decades of the twentieth century, with a major massacre occurring in the north of Western Australia in 1926 (Biskup, 1973: 84f.). Employers were not required to pay Aboriginals the basic wage; often they provided them only with their keep, and Aboriginal workers were rounded up by police if they attempted to leave their ‘employers’ (Biskup, 1973: 77ff.). Those who entered contracts to work could legally be and were flogged if they did not fulfil their contracts (Biskup, 1973: 36f.). Aboriginals were discouraged from sending their children to school, and when they did so, the children were often sent home (Biskup, 1973: 150ff., 163ff., 191f.), usually after pressure from the parents of white children. They were not permitted to enter public hotels and were barred from entering parts of some towns and cities either completely or ‘after curfew’. Aboriginals who protested against their treatment and asked to be given full citizenship rights were not taken seriously. Attempts were made to implement a policy of ‘miscegenation’ where, through ‘organized breeding’, there would be ‘a gradual disappearance of the black colour and the other physical characteristics that go with it’ (Biskup, 1973, 188). To this end, part Aboriginal children were taken from their parents, very often forcibly by their ‘protectors’, to be trained as farm hands or as domestic servants. This began in the 1920s and continued in some parts of Australia until the 1960s. It was assumed that full Aboriginals would die out.

It was not until the Second World War that concerted and effective opposition to such policies began. During the war, some Aborigi-
nals joined the army and, with labour shortages, others were able to gain much better pay. As a consequence of these developments, and appreciation of what Australia was supposedly fighting for, attitudes to Aboriginals were questioned by Australians as never before. Western Australia, which had been one of the most brutally racist states, became a centre of reform. After the war there was a strike by Aboriginal stockmen in the north of the state and in 1948, a new Commissioner of Native Affairs, S. Middleton, was appointed. With a background in anthropology and with administrative experience in New Guinea, Middleton set about transforming the Department of Aboriginal Affairs from a department treating Aboriginals as a problem into a department committed to their welfare (Biskup, 1973: ch.10), later changing its name to the Department of Native Welfare. His stated policy for Aboriginals was 'assimilation into the general community on the basis of reasonable equality in all facets of community life' (Biskup, 1973: 241). Despite initial opposition within his own department and continuing opposition from other government departments (except for the Department of Public Health and the Department of Education), racist attitudes of the general public and local authorities and attacks upon him by politicians, Middleton effectively pursued a policy designed to provide equal opportunity to Aboriginals and vigorously promoted their cause, attacking all forms of racial discrimination, often publicly. He and his officers wrote newspaper articles, spoke to meetings and spoke on the radio. The primary commitments were to providing Aboriginals with housing, hygiene and education, while attacking racism in the community. However he also bought land for Aboriginals and supported a mining venture and attempted to get Aboriginals full citizenship rights to give them equality before the law. Supported by activists, novelists, journalists and academics, politicians and civil servants in other states followed Middleton’s lead, although reforms lagged Western Australia by a decade.

In the 1960s, educated Aboriginals themselves became effective activists, attacking all forms of discrimination and calling for land rights. Charles Perkins, who had visited USA and learnt from the tactics of Jesse Jackson, was the Aboriginals’ most effective leader. Public support followed, and in 1967 the Constitution was changed with overwhelming public support to grant Aboriginals full citizenship rights. In the 1970s the cause of Aboriginals was taken up by one of Australia’s senior civil servants, H.C. Coombs, former governor of the
reserve bank, leading to a much more active involvement by the federal government in defending the cause of Aboriginals. Aboriginals in South Australia, the Northern Territory and Western Australia were granted land rights. Uneven, but substantial progress was made until the early 1980s. By 1981, 10% of land in Australia, and 25% in the Northern Territory (although most of this land was arid and infertile), was reserved for or owned by Aboriginals. Australia’s leading Aboriginal activist and the first Aboriginal to gain a university degree (in 1966), Perkins, was appointed head of the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs in 1981. As noted, these developments had general public support. This is not to say Aboriginals had gained equality. They had not. But their situation had vastly improved, and it was expected that this improvement would continue.

Middleton and those who followed him were implementing a policy that was a logical extension of the growing nationalism within Australia. Nationalism originates in an assertion by people within a territory of their right to freedom from outside domination (Breuilly, 1982: 3). Australian nationalism crystallized when it was threatened with invasion by Japan, but it had been developing since the 1870s in opposition to Australia’s role as a minion of Great Britain, particularly among people of Irish descent and members of the labour movement. Australian nationalists sought to free themselves from domination by Britain. As a territorial ideology, nationalism upholds the community of all those living, those who have lived and those who will live in a particular, bounded territory, the ‘people’s home’. It supersedes, although often incompletely, bloodlines and religion as the defining principle of community identity and political organization (Anderson, 1983). All people, simply by virtue of their place of birth (or by virtue of their acceptance into the territorial community as immigrants) are held to have a special significance for other members of the community. As Benedict Anderson wrote, ‘regardless of the actual inequality and the exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as deep, horizontal comradeship (Anderson, 1983: 16).’ Nationalism is a commitment to upholding justice for all members of the nation. To be consistent, Australian nationalism demanded proper recognition of the significance and plight of its indigenous population, the Aboriginals. Those aligning themselves with this logic, such as Middleton, were on strong ground when they challenged the racist attitudes of the general public and then set about transforming these attitudes.
Explaining Australian Social Democracy and its Consequences for Aboriginals

The development of Australia up until the 1980s, along with similar developments in other countries, vindicated Hegel against Marx in three ways. Firstly, it showed that the market could be controlled by 'corporations' (trade unions and professional bodies) and the institutions of the state to overcome the tendency of a market based civil society to concentrate wealth and render increasing numbers of people destitute (Hegel, 1991: §250-§256). Secondly, it revealed an impetus and capacity in people to do so, for people to unite into 'corporations' to gain proper recognition for their vocation, and for civil servants to transcend their egoism and live for the universal despite civil society being based on the atomic individualism and egoism of market relations (ibid. §287-§297). Thirdly, it showed that this control could be established in a particular territory without waiting for the entire world to be subjugated by market forces and then overcome by a global proletariat.

Where did this impetus to overcome the logic of the market come from? And how was it effective? Essentially, as Hegel argued, the impetus was the struggle for recognition made effective through its embodiment in institutions. Australia had inherited from Britain legal institutions which upheld the right to life (even in the case of Aboriginals, at least in principle) and property, which themselves are a form of recognition. Later, Australians adopted variations of British political institutions that recognized political rights - recognition of the freedom for people to assert themselves without fear of retribution and the right to representation in the supreme deliberative bodies of the state. These together provided the conditions for Australians to push for tariff barriers to enable them to develop a national economy, and for workers to unionize and organize strikes to gain more pay and better work conditions, and then to organize politically to gain more rights and recognition for workers. The arbitration system that developed after Federation was a significant extension of this legal system towards recognizing the needs of and contribution to society of those engaged in each occupation. These developments were enhanced by the development of a professional civil service that created the conditions for addressing the plight of the weakest and most oppressed people in Australian society, including the Aboriginals. The develop-
ment of the civil service in Australia was very much in accord with the ideas of Hegel, who argued that the task of upholding legality and the interest of the state in universality within particular rights requires a civil service made up of people who have proved themselves by knowledge and ability (Hegel, 1991: §287ff.).

However, something more is required to account for the commitment to an oppressed group. Where did nationalism come from with its ‘deep, horizontal comradeship’? This is the development of what Axel Honneth described as ‘solidarity’, the sense of being part of a group that upholds goals to which individuals contribute and are esteemed for their contributions. This is fundamentally different from other forms of recognition, such as ‘love’ or ‘recognition of rights’, in granting a central place to people’s differences. As Honneth noted, ‘social esteem is directed ... at the particular qualities that characterize people in their personal difference. Thus, whereas modern law represents a medium of recognition that expresses the universal features of human subjects, this form of recognition demands a social medium that must be able to express the characteristic differences among human subjects in a universal, and, more specifically, intersubjectively obligatory way (Honneth, 1995: 122).’ If humans aspire to an identity through recognition, it clearly serves them to have such solidarity, but this does not account for the coming into existence of such groups with such qualities? The best way to understand this, without recourse to Hegel’s teleological theory of history, is to use the conceptual tools developed by Pierre Bourdieu, someone who is not usually acknowledged as contributing to the study of forms of recognition.

Bourdieu’s theory of ‘fields’ is a generalization of Marx’s Hegelian analysis of the market economy. Bourdieu accepted Marx’s argument that what appear to be autonomous individuals acting according to their own interests are actually products of an emergent historically developing system of social relations constraining them to recognize each other and to compete with each other for socially recognized forms of power, ‘capital’, in such a way that they reproduce and develop this system of relations – while misrecognizing the true nature of these relations. Bourdieu pointed out that the production of cultural products (paintings, poems, novels etc.) also takes place in a field of objective, historical relations between objective positions, with actors struggling against each other for various forms of ‘capital’, thereby reproducing this field while misrecognizing their relation to it and how
their actions reproduce it. ‘Capital’ as conceived in this context is any form of power which enables actors to participate in fields to gain further capital, thereby augmenting their position in the field, for instance, social contacts (social capital), competence in deciphering cultural relations or cultural artefacts (cultural capital), and most importantly, the power, deriving from prestige and authority, gained within the field, to define reality (symbolic capital). To enter and be a successful actor within the field it is necessary to have developed the right *habitus*, a transposable disposition to perceive, evaluate and act in certain ways, an appreciation of the value of the different forms of capital and a ‘feel for the game’. *Habitus* functions simultaneously to make people acceptable (or unacceptable) to other actors in the field, to enable them to cope with unforeseen and ever changing situations, and to act in a way that reproduces the field. These notions of the field, capital and *habitus* were used to characterize and analyse a range of social spaces, including the field of education, the artistic field, the field of the novel, the political field, the academic field, the religious field and the national field. Each of these was shown to have its own specific ‘capital’ or capitals and its own specific logic, irreducible to any other field.

A new field comes into existence when a new form of capital comes into existence that is dependent upon and required for participation in the field. Subsequently, the field is structured in two dimensions. The first dimension is the degree of consecration. Those working at the consecrated edge of the field are the conservatives, accepting the values the dominant actors and acting or producing works accordingly. The second dimension is the degree of autonomy. Some participants within fields strive for forms of capital that are really heteronomous to the field, for instance artists who are primarily interested in making money; but others strive for capital autonomous from the capital of any other field, pre-eminently recognition from other participants within the field. Pursuing this capital augments it in relation to the capital of other fields and augments the autonomy of the field. The consecrated, autonomous end of the field will generally be irrelevant to and present no challenge to other fields; for instance, the pursuit of art for art’s sake. However, those working at the unconsecrated, autonomous corner of the field have most reason to uphold notions of truth and justice to define symbolic capital and frequently challenge and ultimately transform not only this field but also the way other
fields operate. Those radicals in the scientific field who uphold notions of truth or those in the legal field who uphold notions of justice and who draw upon the symbolic capital achieved within the scientific or legal field to contest the beliefs, judgements and actions of politicians, illustrate this. From the perspective of society, this is the most potent area within any field, and those who strive to occupy it are taking the highest risks for the greatest capital.

While Bourdieu was wary of making generalizations about the relations between fields, his work required that this issue be addressed. To begin with, the notion of power is central to Bourdieu’s concept of field, and Bourdieu acknowledged that different fields have different powers. The power of any field can be measured by the exchange value of its specific forms of capital and by the ability of its participants to control the exchange rate. While generally, Bourdieu held the economic field to be the most potent field, he also came to appreciate the role of the state in consolidating the different fields and wielding power over them and over the various forms of capital that circulate within them, influencing their rate of exchange. This specifically statist capital is a meta-capital, and the holders of various forms of capital struggle for this to augment their specific capital and control its reproduction (Bourdieu, 1992: 114).

Initially Bourdieu was most interested in showing how the education and cultural fields function to limit social mobility (Bourdieu, 1984), and this remained an abiding interest. In doing so, he was upholding the long tradition of radical thought concerned to identify anything standing in the way of total social inclusion without hierarchy. However, with further research, Bourdieu became increasingly aware of the role of autonomous fields in limiting the power of those with economic capital while augmenting the power of those without economic capital, and he became increasingly hostile to those undermining this autonomy. He noted in a study of the field of cultural production, ‘In endeavoring to discredit every attempt to impose an autonomous principle of hierarchization, and thus serving their own interests, they serve the interests of the dominant fractions of the dominant class, who obviously have an interest in there being only one hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1993: 41).’ In Acts of Resistance, responding to the rise in France of neo-liberalism, Bourdieu mounted a furious attack against those undermining the autonomy of cultural fields (Bourdieu, 1998: 11f.)
With Bourdieu’s notion of ‘field’ we can characterize how the dialectic of recognition operated in Australian history and appreciate the significance of Australian nationalism. Australia’s colonization was an extension of the economic field dominated by the British ruling class, a field that denied significance to anyone without property or labour to sell. As the colony evolved, one field after another emerged, recognizing the significance of people beyond their role in the market and constraining the market’s logic. The autonomy of the legal field manifested itself in 1838 when seven murderers of Aboriginais were sentenced to death. The autonomy of the political field showed itself when governors opposed the rapacious behaviour of the colonists and set aside reserves for the Aboriginais. However, at this stage these constraints on the market were really due to extensions of the British legal and political fields. Later, local fields began to emerge. The press generated a field transcending the market, a public sphere that engendered critical debate about political issues. The press also provided the conditions for the emergence of a literary field in the 1880s, a field in which poets and short story writers flourished, portraying and celebrating the hardships of pioneering and working life and the rebellion of bushrangers while ridiculing the class society of England (Crawford, 1971). At the same time an autonomous artistic field emerged. The trade union movement, which developed in the second half of the nineteenth century and which led to the formation of the Labor Party, functioned not only to bargain for better pay, but to achieve recognition for the significance of workers, their needs and their contributions to society. Along with the emerging cultural field, this contributed to the emergence of an Australian political field with its own specific capital in the pursuit of which actors promulgated and debated issues of justice and long-term goals for the colonies.

The federation of Australia generated an Australian political field, the most important product of which was a commitment to developing a national economy and the setting up of tariffs to achieve this; that is, a national economic field insulated from the British and global economic field, a field which could be controlled by a national government. This control provided the conditions to develop public institutions, state owned banks, a complex of public works and a civil service. Together with the cultural fields, these interacted to generate a nascent national field with a specific capital through which Australians struggled for recognition of their significance from each other in-
dependent of the market and the British, which in turn provided the capital to augment the autonomy of the other fields. Australia was still dominated by a plutocracy defining itself in terms of wealth, hoping to return to and gain respect in the ‘mother country’, but after the Second World War, the Australian national field came to prevail, despite the political dominance of the Liberal Party led by the Anglophile Robert Menzies. The civil service generated its own autonomous fields engendering a commitment to creating an egalitarian society with full employment. It was in these circumstances that civil servants such as Middleton, Coombs and Perkins could rise to the top positions in the civil service and vigorously pursue proper recognition of Aboriginals, their history and their plight. The appointment of Middleton and his subsequent assertiveness reflected the growing autonomy of the civil service field, being based upon and upholding a new professionalism which gave those who accumulated symbolic capital within it the possibility of occupying and succeeding in the unconsecrated, autonomous corner of the Australian national field. When the Australian Labor Party, led by Gough Whitlam, won the Federal elections in 1972, statist capital was used to elevate the exchange value of capital of the cultural and educational fields over economic capital and thereby to augment the autonomy of the Australian national field. It was then that Australian nationalism reached its peak, and along with it, the most concerted efforts to address the injustices done to Aboriginals.

The Transition

Although the conditions of Aboriginals had vastly improved, in the 1970s Australia was still characterized by entrenched inequalities and entrenched racism, particularly in northern Australia. Aboriginals still belonged to the lowest strata of society. Assimilation meant that Aboriginals had to compete with other members of society for capital within the various fields, beginning with the educational field that provided initial capital for entry into most other fields. In the late 1960s some people (Perkins and Coombs in particular) started questioning the whole idea of assimilation and suggested that Aboriginal culture should be preserved. Perkins promoted the idea of Aboriginal self-determination. Aboriginals should not have to compete with other Australians but should revive their own culture and define themselves
through this, and should be in control of their own communities. Government policy changed in the 1970s from ‘assimilation’ to ‘integration’, implying a need to recognize the distinctive history and culture of Aboriginals. Later, in place of integration, the government adopted multiculturalism as a policy. There were a number of facets to this. It involved a quest to address the problems of minority groups who were systematically marginalized and disadvantaged, including increasing numbers of immigrants from Asia. It was also a means of validating the significance of these people.

However, there were more sinister motives for promoting multiculturalism, particularly after the dismissal of the Whitlam government in 1975. The Liberal Fraser government adopted multiculturalism as ‘a key strategy in a conservative restructuring of the welfare state whose main purpose was the demolition of Whitlam-style social democracy (Castles et. al., 1988: 23).’ In 1983, with the election of the Hawke-Keating Labor government, there was a total political and economic reorientation. Australia had been suffering from ‘stagflation’, a combination of economic stagnation with high inflation. Rather than meeting this by developing an income distribution policy and stimulating the economy, the government decided to solve the problem, while avoiding the reactions from business groups, the media and USA which had destroyed the Whitlam government, by deregulating trade and financial markets while increasing immigration, co-opting the leadership of the trade union movement and destroying its democratic structure to get support for this. The aim was to make Australia competitive in the international market for capital by reducing costs of production, disciplining domestic businesses, the workforce and public institutions by exposing them to competition from the global market. That is, the Labor Party embraced what is commonly called ‘neo-liberalism’, (referred to in Australia as ‘economic rationalism’, although a more appropriate name might be ‘managerialist market fundamentalism’) and turned its back on economic nationalism. Multiculturalism was promoted even more strongly than it had been under the Fraser government. There was still some concern to address the plight of Aboriginals and diverse immigrants; however it was the concern to undermine any opposition to neo-liberalism by dissolving national solidarity and weakening the cohesiveness of trade unions that was paramount. As noted, neo-liberalism was a rejection of the economic nationalism that had been promoted by the labour movement in Aus-
Australia from its inception. This involved undermining the sense of Australia being an 'imagined community' which implicitly projects a vision of a society based on something more than mere market relations based on egoistic individualism. As a first stage in dissolving this imagined community, neo-liberal policies absolved politicians from responsibility for charting Australia's future by dissolving the political field into the economic field. As Michael Pusey recently described this policy:

Our own economic rationalist [neo-liberal] prescription proceeds from the extreme assumption that economies, markets, money and prices can always, at least in principle, deliver better outcomes than states, governments, and the law. And, further, that the market provides the only practical means for setting values on anything. ... [N]othing is off-limits to the strategy of securing the maximum possible penetration of the market mechanism. Civil society becomes a 'stubbornly resisting sludge' through which one must somehow drive the economy. Deliberative politics, participatory democracy and independent criticism are cast, a prior, as frustration to economic efficiency. And government itself is recast as the enemy of governance. ... Both in its conception and its implementation, economic reform of this kind is violence to open democratic government. (Pusey, 2003: 9f.)

How was this brought about? To begin with, in Bourdieu's terminology, statist capital was used to devalue every form of capital other than economic capital, thereby rendering powerless those who would question the power of the wealthy. The cultural field was evaluated purely in economic terms according to whether it might stimulate the tourist industry or could bring in foreign revenue. Novelists and artists lost their symbolic power. The field of education was looked at merely as an instrument of the economy, to train people for jobs and to develop technology that could improve business profitability. The symbolic capital of the academic field evaporated almost completely; intellectuals were dismissed by the Minister of Finance as the 'chattering class' and academics now define themselves in terms of how much money they are bringing into universities. Successive neo-liberal governments have facilitated the concentration of media ownership, allowing the American media magnate, Rupert Murdoch, who has used his media empire to promote neo-liberalism and, more recently, American neo-conservatism, throughout the world, to control Austra-
lia's most widely read newspapers, amounting to 70% of readership. Murdoch also dominates cable television. As a result, the autonomy of the journalistic field has dissolved.

The civil service was also transformed with the autonomy of the civil service field being destroyed and, along with it, the specific capital associated with the field based on a *habitus* of public service. Federally, the power of Treasury was increased, allowing it to impose its economist criteria on all other departments. As Pusey, who had previously undertaken a major study of the transformations of the federal civil service (Pusey, 1991), wrote, 'the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the Minister of Finance – together with two or three other senior cabinet ministers – and a handful of elite and narrowly trained neoclassical economists, most of them steeped in American econometrics ... have destroyed the capacity of a once excellent and highly professional public service, one of the best in the world, to deliver independent advice and policy in the public interest and without fear or favour (Pusey, 2003: 10).’ To carry through this dramatic transformation, government institutions were treated as business enterprises, headed by managers appointed as henchmen of the governments of the day who treated their employees as mere labour-power to be exploited. Many civil servants, who had demonstrated their commitment to the common good of the national field by working for much lower salaries than were paid to equivalent employees in the private sector, but who also assumed, as a condition for their being able to carry out their duties, that they would have job security, were retrenched. Schools, hospitals, universities and social welfare agencies underwent similar transformations with power concentrated in the hands of managers. Professionals (teachers, doctors, nurses, academics etc.) were proletarianised. Most of the remaining civil servants adopted a policy of 'survival' at all costs, suppressing unpopular advice while working to ensure that others, not they, would be next in line for retrenchment. Civil servants such as Middleton or Coombs would have had no chance of being appointed in this environment, and civil servants with a similar *habitus* lost their positions. Charles Perkins, leading Aboriginal activist, the first Aboriginal to gain a university degree and the first Aboriginal to be appointed head of a government department, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, was forced to resign in 1988.

All this was in the service of dissolving the Australian economic field into the global economic field, and it is this that has had the
greatest impact on Australia and Australians. What this meant was that the market could no longer be controlled in the public interest. The immanent tendency of the market to concentrate wealth and income both between and within countries was liberated. By abandoning itself to the forces of the global market, Australia has lost much of its wealth. Australian companies have been taken over, public assets privatized for tens of billions of dollars less than their true value (Walker & Walker, 2000: 24), net foreign debt per capita increased from $A600 in June 1981 to $A16,800 in June 2002 and profits are now repatriated overseas at record levels. At the same time income and wealth remaining in Australia has been concentrated. Workers have lost out. Examining the incomes of full-time male employees (which includes some highly paid professionals and business managers whose incomes have increased astronomically), Professor Bob Gregory of the Australian National University found that between 1976 and 1995:

At each end of the age distribution there are considerable falls in real per capita full-time employment income. Consider young men first. For 15-19 year olds, per capita full-time employment income has fallen by 60 per cent or $96 per week over the 1976-95 period. For young men of 20-24, the fall is 32 per cent or $147 per week. The fall in full-time employment income is not confined to the very young. For 25-34 year olds the income fall is $93 per week. Then, for men of 35-54, the income fall per week is marginal. For 60-64 year olds, the weekly income fall is $128 (Gregory, 1999: 31).

However those in full-time employment were the lucky ones. Twenty seven per cent of the workforce is now in casual employment and there has been a massive increase in real unemployment. While the official rate is 6.1% (as opposed to less than 2% for almost the entire period from 1945 to 1970), this figure does not take into account the long-term unemployed who have been pushed into taking disability pensions, people who work for as little as one hour per fortnight, people on work-for-the-dole schemes, unemployed wives with working husbands, men supported by their partners who have given up looking for work and people, sometimes in their 40s, who have been retrenched and eke out a living on their truncated retirement schemes. Adding all these people together gives an unemployment rate of well
over 20%. Most people now have a far shorter working life, spending more time in education and then in casual employment before getting full-time work, then face retrenchment in their 50s, earning far less over their working lives. When they are working full-time, they have very little job security and they work far longer hours, much of it unpaid. In a country which pioneered the eight hour day, the 48 hour week, the 44 hour week and the 40 hour week, most people employed full-time are now required to work more than 50 hours per week if they want to retain their jobs, although officially the figure is 44 hours. There have been similar dramatic falls in real incomes associated with much heavier workloads among farmers and small businesses.

There are people who, financially, have benefited tremendously from these changes. This is a class of people engaged in management and finance, usually, although not always, in transnational corporations, and the agents promoting the interests of these corporations. It also includes the new managers of Australia’s public institutions. The core of their ideology, as with the nineteenth century bourgeoisie, is the science of economics and social Darwinism. As with the former ruling class of Australia, the reference group of this class of managers is not the Australian community. However, rather than Great Britain and the British Empire, their reference group is the new transnational capitalist ruling class based in USA (Sklair, 2001). When the ‘managers’ of universities consider what incomes they should be receiving, they compare themselves not with academics but managers of businesses; when Australian business managers consider what incomes they are entitled to, they do not compare themselves with other Australians, but with people in similar positions in USA. The ultimate recognition aspired to by Australia’s Prime Minister, John Howard, is to be spoken to by President Bush Junior and invited to stay at his ranch. Inclusion in this class is based mainly on growing up in the right suburbs and attending the elite private schools and the elite universities. The right social environment engenders the right habitus. Such people are now insulated by their wealth, incomes and social capital from contact with the rest of the population, living mostly in the affluent suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne. However, they are highly mobile and are able to move easily from country to country.

The increasing affluence of this new ruling class along with the drop in income of working people and the high level of real unemployment is reflected in the income distribution within Census Collec-
tion Districts. Between 1976 and 1991 the income gap between the top 5% and the bottom 5% of CDs widened by 92% (Pusey, 2003: 23), and has widened much more since then. Children of working people living in less salubrious suburbs, attending the now rundown state schools with lower standards inculcating low expectations, and increasingly excluded from the elite universities, have little prospect of entering the new ruling class. In the poorest areas, children grow up in communities where adults have never had full-time employment and who have no expectations for their children, and where drug abuse is endemic. They develop a habitus that excludes them from almost every other social realm. For the most part such people can only afford to live where work is unavailable.

The new ruling class conceptualizes its relation to the rest of Australian society in purely economic terms. Working Australians no longer have the income security and time to support and educate children, so there is a massive drop in their fertility rate. This is a matter of indifference to the new ruling class who appear to have calculated that it is cheaper to import educated people from India and other such countries than provide the incomes and educational facilities required for working Australians to biologically and culturally reproduce themselves. The permanently unemployed are merely a law and order problem, to be provided with the minimum necessary to ensure they don’t become too offensive. They have become a ‘rabble’ in Hegel’s sense of the term where ‘that feeling of right, integrity, and honour which comes from supporting oneself by one’s own activity and work is lost (Hegel, 1991, §244).’ In other words, with neo-liberalism, the main form of exclusion operative in Australia is essentially the form of exclusion identified by Hegel and Marx in the nineteenth century as an inevitable outcome of the unconstrained operation of the market.

Multiculturalism and the Aboriginals

In this context, how has multiculturalism affected the lives of Aboriginals? While multiculturalism was associated with the push for land rights for Aboriginals, it also involved a reversal of policies that had empowered Aboriginals. A crucial issue was education. Peter Biskup wrote of how at the beginning of twentieth century Aboriginals in northern W.A. had wanted to learn from the colonists:
Perceiving that some of the customs and beliefs of their fathers appeared to be baseless, the young people tended to ignore the old men, only to find that the Europeans were not prepared to share their 'tribal secrets' with them. An old man told ... how, in his youth, his group had persistently tried to camp near a station in order to learn more of the white man's ways, only to be chased away with equal persistency (Biskup, 1973: 34).

It was such concerns that led Aboriginals to make continued efforts to get schooling for their children. In Western Australia the Native Welfare Department had been committed above all to giving Aboriginals a good education. In the early 1970s many of its functions were taken over and given to the Community Welfare Department. The Community Welfare Department, embracing the idea that Aboriginals had a different culture, allowed Aboriginal children to avoid school, isolating and making it less easy for those Aboriginals who wanted to attend school to do so. The result is that many members of a generation of Aboriginals in W.A., including some of its leaders, are illiterate. In a society exposed to the 'discipline' of the global market, this has put them in a very weak position.

Despite such developments, the Fraser Liberal government and the Hawke and Keating Labor governments were basically sympathetic to Aboriginals and continued to promote their interests, including their quest for land rights. However, undermining the solidarity of the Australian national community and exposing Australia to the global market damaged Australia's economically weakest members the most, and these were Aboriginals. Their unemployment rate skyrocketed and their communities disintegrated. Deregulating the market involved abandoning the commitment to equality of opportunity and the welfare state that had driven social reform in the past. Without this, to succeed in life people are more dependent for support from their ethnic communities and the networks they provide (social capital). Different ethnic groups have tended to dominate different domains of the economy and to exclude people not from their ethnic groups. They function as castes, membership of which is hereditary. Aboriginals are now one caste among others, its members excluded from the communities and social support of other castes. They have had some limited success in having the injustices done to them in the past addressed, but as a caste, they are the untouchables at the bottom of the hierarchy. Still, there are now some people even worse off than
Aboriginals. The politicians who promoted multiculturalism took it for granted that their culture was supreme. They called upon their fellow Australians to tolerate people from non-English speaking, non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds (Hage, 1998: 78-116). In fact, this was a call by those who were to be winners from neo-liberal policies, those educated in the elite private schools who formed part of a supportive network penetrating and dominating all areas of society, to the losers, those educated in the state schools who relied upon a fair system of government administration, a good education system and a flourishing national economy to prosper. By redefining Anglo-Celts as one ethnic group or caste amongst others, the history and culture of native Australians as members of a nation that had struggled to create a classless society independent of and different from the class society of Britain, was denied. With the dissolution of national solidarity, native Australians outside the ruling class have been left without a cultural identity and with little community support. Abandoned by the political parties that used to represent their interests, some have formed an underclass of permanently unemployed ‘rabble’. To claim some status, some of these have redefined themselves as Aboriginals. It is significant that the number of people calling themselves Aboriginals increased by 33% between 1991 and 1996 (AIHW, 2001: 1), and some genuine part Aboriginals are calling for DNA tests to exclude such people from their caste. In this context even the extremely limited and largely symbolic achievements by Aboriginals are now being undermined. The journalist, John Pilger, recently characterized their situation. He recounted a conversation with a doctor providing Aboriginal medical services: ‘By most measures of indigenous health ... Australia is the last in the world. The Aboriginal people suffer from diseases we saw the end of in the Edinburgh slums in the last century, like rheumatic fever. Here it is the highest ever reported in the world. And diabetes, which affects up to a quarter of the adult Aboriginal population, causing kidney failure and diabetic blindness. And gastro-enteritis...’ ‘What's the cause?’ Pilger asked. ‘Poverty and dispossession.’ the doctor replied (Pilger, 2002: 163). The doctor went on to describe how children commit suicide because they have no hope for the future, the poor housing, how despite the incredible health problems of Aboriginals, the government spends 25 per cent less per capita on Aboriginal health than it does for the rest of the population. Pilger then described how the founder of the One Nation Party, Pauline Hanson, began her
career standing for election in 1996 in an electorate with one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, with 50 per cent of young people unemployed. She attacked Aboriginals as ‘privileged’ and claimed millions of dollars were wasted on them (Pilger, 2002: 169). Despite losing her endorsement as a Liberal Party candidate, the electorate flocked to her, and she won the seat normally held comfortably by the Labor Party.

This provided John Howard, the right wing leader of the Liberal Party, which won the 1996 election, with a strategy not only for maintaining power, but to implement neo-liberal policies even more extremely. He would blame the poor, the weak and the destitute for the economic woes caused by neo-liberalism. He cut $A400 million from the Aboriginal affairs budget, and reversed one of the most significant gains Aboriginals had made (in 1993), an act overturning the myth of terra nullius and recognizing that Australia had indeed been occupied when the British flag had been planted in 1770. He attempted to overturn legislation of more than 150 years standing to make pastoral leases freehold instead of leasehold, putting 42% of Australia into the hands of fewer than 20,000 people (Pilger, 2002: 176) and preventing tribal Aboriginals using this land. Recently he has supported the rewriting of history to deny what was done to Aboriginals. He fostered a racist, paranoid nationalism among Australia’s poorer Anglo-Celtic population (Hage, 2003), scapegoating not only Aboriginals, but also refugees from Islamic countries. This strategy has been strikingly successful. Howard has massive public support from Australia’s working population, enabling him to win two more elections and implement economic and social policies which are erasing the last vestiges of Australia’s egalitarian culture and destroying along with it the few gains made by Aboriginals. However, it was the neo-liberal policies of the Hawke and Keating Labor Party governments, undermining the national field with its complex of partially autonomous fields and creating a ‘multicultural’ caste society, which made the rise of Howard possible.

From Multiculturalism and Paranoid Nationalism to Polyphonic Nationalism

By examining Australia’s history to show the relationship between the market, colonialism, nationalism and the effects of these on Aborigi-
nals, we are now in a position to explain the paradox that multiculturalism, promoting greater respect for diverse cultures, is associated with greater social exclusion, especially of Australia's most socially excluded group, the Aboriginals. While multiculturalism is at least in part a reaction against forms of exclusion, it is a reaction which does not eliminate exclusion but replaces forms of exclusion with relatively permeable boundaries by forms of exclusion with rigid boundaries while undermining the inclusiveness of the broader community. In practice, multiculturalism accords with neo-liberalism and the dissolution of almost every field, including the national field, into the economic field, and the dissolution of the national economic field into the global economic field. All this can be seen in the recent history of Australia. Multiculturalism has contributed to creating a divided, caste based society in which the poorest castes are now being blamed for the impoverishing effects and economic insecurity generated by neo-liberalism.

Could some form of multiculturalism have been upheld without its divisive effects? Could social democracy have been preserved with multiculturalism? There are good reasons to doubt this. Multiculturalism is incompatible with the kinds of fields that uphold the quest for truth and justice and with efforts to use the state to control the market. It promotes an attenuated notion of culture that has facilitated an entrenchment of neo-liberalism. As Marx showed, the categories of economics that constitute the forms of life in a capitalist society are not 'natural' but are cultural. In promoting multiculturalism, there is no question of allowing different cultural groups to develop forms of life displacing these categories. The categories of economics, – 'commodity', 'property', 'work', 'capital', 'resources', 'income' etc. – are presupposed by multiculturalism and thereby made sacrosanct. Rather, what is meant by 'culture' is that which pertains to the realm of private consumption. This includes religious belief systems that are held thereby to be merely a matter of private choice outside the realm of rational questioning and public debate. So, just as the categories of economics dominating public life are placed beyond questioning, so also are all other facets of culture by being designated as 'private', and there can be no place allowed for one realm to challenge the other. In Australia this reinforced a view that there need be no place in society for cultivating spaces within which people could critically reflect on their cultural heritage and, in the light of revealed inadequacies, de-
velop new ways of thinking, perceiving and acting in relation to each other, to society and nature. This undermined any reason for supporting the autonomy of cultural fields to question and overcome the deficiencies of Australian culture.

The failure to appreciate cultures dynamically as the forms and processes through which people create and transform themselves is connected with the failure of the neo-Hegelian defenders of multiculturalism to appreciate the relationship between culture, power and the conditions for collective action. Taylor's defense of multiculturalism appeared to suggest that as the next stage in the development of recognition, the recognition of cultural differences, superseded older struggles for equality. This produced a reaction from other neo-Hegelians such as Axel Honneth who argued for the continued importance of 'just redistribution' (Honneth, 2001). However, what is missing from such responses is a concern with power relations. Solidarity is important not only because it provides people with esteem as participants in community projects. It is important because it is required to inspire people to make the sacrifices necessary to defend the community and its autonomy from people who would challenge it. And it is not only unity of purpose that is required. What is called for is effective, collective action. In particular it is necessary to achieve the unity of purpose required to subordinate the destructive imperatives of the market. There is a systematic blindness to this issue by intellectuals of the left, whether they are neo-Hegelians, orthodox Marxists or neo-Nietzschean postmodernists, who are always concerned to demonstrate their purity by refusing to recognize the value of any social form which is in any way exclusive.

Hegel and Bourdieu, by contrast, came to appreciate the importance of exclusion to achieve a more comprehensive inclusion. Hegel called for the control of the market by a range of institutions that are by their very nature exclusive: the family, the corporation and the civil service, including the legal system and the education system. These institutions were characterized in terms of forms of recognition, so that Hegel not only provided an ideal, but also revealed the motivations of people that would inspire them to uphold this ideal, while displaying an acute appreciation of the power relations operative within and between institutions and between states. One of the main achievements of Bourdieu was to have combined an analysis of the struggle for recognition with an analysis of how power operates. Bourdieu's work
augments Hegel's political philosophy, providing the basis for analysing the emergence of diverse social spaces that uphold values transcending the pursuit of money. While Bourdieu was concerned to show that there is no reason to assume that fields serve a function within society, I have suggested those people in the autonomous, unconsecrated corner of fields, by virtue of their risky positions have a propensity to work towards augmenting not only their own fields, but all other fields to which their fields are related and dependent, and in particular, to upholding the quest for truth and justice both as ideals and in practice. Thereby they tend to have a major impact not only on their own fields, but on all other fields.

What role does nationalism play in achieving inclusion? Nationalism is rooted in the resistance to domination and the quest for self-determination by a territorially defined community. Anti-nationalists generally fail to appreciate this while confusing nationalism with more archaic forms of identity structures such as racism and religion, with which nationalism is sometimes contaminated. Still, nationalism occasionally has taken aggressive forms and it is by its very nature exclusive. However, to be consistent, nationalists should support quests for self-determination by other territorial communities. In the quest for self-determination a consistently nationalistic Scot, for instance, should simultaneously embrace Scottish nationalism to gain independence from Britain, embrace the extended nationalism of the European Union in its effort to maintain its autonomy from USA and the global market (Seers, 1983: 143-185), and strongly support the United Nations as an institution for upholding the rights of all territorial communities to self-determination. Ultimately, a consistent nationalism is inclusive.

Why is territory the best basis for defining inclusive communities in the modern world? As soon as we start considering democratic political action it becomes immediately clear that control of some definite territory is the starting point for sustaining the autonomous fields required for an inclusive, democratic community. How else could the market be controlled to serve the public interest except through institutions and fields regulating a certain territory? And as I have tried to show through the history of Australia, unless the market and its agents are controlled, there will be more exclusion than inclusion. Multiculturalism cannot be the basis for achieving democratic control over the market and cripples forms which can. For cultural life to sustain the conditions for its own reproduction and development, it
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should be developed as a national culture, the culture of a territorial community.

Does this mean that to achieve social inclusion nations should strive for homogeneous cultures? This view also represents a failure to appreciate cultures as dynamic. Homogeneity is a recipe for stagnation and degeneration, especially for a community continually confronting new challenges from a rapidly changing world. It is necessary for a community to foster differences to enrich its repertoire of responses to problems and, more importantly, by challenging parochial, taken for granted assumptions, to promote cultural reflexivity. Such reflexivity is the condition for the creative transformation of a culture. It is also the condition for assimilating ideas and forms of thinking from other cultures without being overwhelmed by them. Traditionally, immigrants have played an important role in generating such heterogeneity. However, for such diversity to function in this way, people need to take seriously the views of others and accept the challenge of these to their own views. And if people are not to be overwhelmed by diversity, it is necessary to acknowledge the history of the development of the national culture, its major achievements and the canonical works that have advanced it in the past, and its failures and weaknesses. It is necessary for new participants (colonists or immigrants) to acknowledge the pre-existence of traditions which, to participate within and challenge, they should understand and appreciate. That is, what is required to overcome social exclusion is a ‘polyphonic’ culture (Bakhtin, 1986: 151), a culture that has a place for diverse voices challenging and contesting each other. In place of anti-nationalist multiculturalism and paranoid nationalism, what is required to achieve an inclusive society is a polyphonic nationalism. In Australia, the original Aboriginal culture would not be regarded as one culture among others, but as the original culture, the culture which all those living in Australia should be obliged to understand and appreciate as part of their national history.

References


