2018

Paul Piccone's Providential Moment: Phenomenology, Subjectivity, and 20th Century Marxism in Telos

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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April 18, 2018

Acknowledgments

This thesis is a direct result of the support I received from the people around me. First, Dr. Joseph Bendersky has inspired me to pursue my interests in intellectual history, guiding me with patience, humor, and kindness. Even after working as his graduate teaching assistant and taking a dozen classes with him, his erudition continues to astound me. I would like to thank my wonderful mother Catherine MacDonald for helping me with research, editing, and maintaining my sanity throughout this long and arduous process, and my father John Ulmschneider for his unfailing support, both material and otherwise, in my pursuit of academic success. I would also like to acknowledge my brother Sam Ulmschneider, whose passion for history and knowledge of philosophy was a tremendous boon during the writing process. I cannot forget to thank my close friends, who were there for me whenever the work seemed too much, the edits relentless, or my ideas incoherent, willing to listen to and support me, no matter how obscure and boring they might have found the subject matter. Finally, I want to thank the members of my thesis committee, Dr. Timothy Thurber and Dr. Bryant Mangum, for the time and effort they expended on my behalf during the revisions and defense.

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Abstract

PAUL PICCONE'S PROVIDENTIAL MOMENT: PHENOMENOLOGY, SUBJECTIVITY, AND 20TH-CENTURY MARXISM IN *TELOS*

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This thesis explores the intellectual history of editor, writer, and philosopher, Paul Piccone and *Telos,* an independent journal of contemporary critical theory, which he founded in 1968. Born in Italy, Piccone lived most of his life in the United States, earning his Ph.D. in philosophy at SUNY-Buffalo in 1970. Piccone served as *Telos'* editor and a major contributor from 1968 to 2004. This thesis follows the trajectory of his thought by contextualizing his writing within the broader world of Marxist, and eventually post-Marxist, political philosophy. *Telos* also concerned itself with modern interpretations of historical dialectics and early 20th-century Marxist philosophy. Piccone himself predicated much of his philosophy on Husserlian phenomenology, which stresses concrete experiences, and his writing therefore stands at a unique confluence of Husserl and Marx. Piccone ultimately became a leading exponent of anti-Liberal philosophy and the theory of artificial negativity, which examines capitalist hegemony in both material and socio-historical terms.

Introduction

In the fall of 1968, in the second issue of *Telos*, Paul Piccone—then still a graduate

student in philosophy at SUNY-Buffalo—wrote an impassioned (if theory-laden) plea for the

revitalization of dialectical logic in the neo-Hegelian tradition, situating dialectical reasoning

outside of the geopolitical binary of the Cold War. Despite the ostensibly leftist orientation of

Telos, the pages of which were brimming with Marxist interpretations of current events,

philosophy, and history, Piccone demonstrated from the beginning the degree to which *Telos*

would eschew dichotomized political categorization and reject dogmatic partisanship. "But such

a worldwide state of affairs," Piccone wrote, regarding Warsaw Pact- NATO competition, "[is]

an international fraud that straitjackets reality into two equally untenable ideological

postures… ,"[1] leaving the world "hopelessly stalemated between ruthless repression and

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[1] Paul Piccone, "Dialectical Logic Today," *Telos* no. 2 (Fall 1968): 40, *Telos* online archive, http://journal.telospress.com/content/1968/2.toc. (accessed October 2016).

computerized exploitation."[2] It was this intellectually stultifying framework as well as the political-ideological-philosophical context it produced in terms of real-world sympathies and organizational tendencies, that repulsed Piccone and many early *Telos* contributors, who perceived the capacity of hopeless dogmatism to preclude the possibility of what they would deem genuine "qualitative" change that might improve the lives of human beings rather than the fortunes of political entities.

The fundamental mission of *Telos*—perennial intellectual gadfly that it was, both substantive and universally critical—has been manifested in terms of absolute resistance to the intellectually dissatisfying and dangerous trends on the left and Liberalism, both as a discourse and an economic system associated with capitalism. *Telos* was founded—in the words of Paul Piccone, who, prior to his death was the animating force behind *Telos* and its intellectual shifts— in order to provide the New Left of the late 1960s with a "rigorous theoretical perspective and a clear sense of direction."[3] This sense of direction, for Piccone, required a bellicose and occasionally combative philosophical engagement with the sacrosanct idols of leftist thought contemporary to the early years of *Telos* and arguably presaged *Telos*'s eventual shift (in the late 1970s and early 1980s) to what many participants deemed a conservative or right-wing perspective.[4] However, it would be incorrect to characterize this shift as a genuine lurch to the right—rather, it was the aggregation of numerous lines of argument opposed to the centrality of the bureaucratic and administered late-capitalist world dominated by transnational entities that had effectively erased externalities and social distinctiveness. Though this did concern itself with what might traditionally be regarded as conservative concepts, these engagements emanated

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[2] Piccone, "Dialectical Logic Today," 39.

[3] Ben Agger and Tim Luke, *A Journal of No Illusions: Telos, Paul Piccone, and the Americanization of Critical Theory* (New York, NY: Telos Press, 2011), 68.

[4] Agger and Luke, *A Journal of No Illusions,* 95.

from a fundamental desire to undermine the deleterious social effects of capitalist development rather than a reactionary evaluation of the value of traditional institutions.

The centrality of criticism in service of advancing what Russell Berman calls a "radical phenomenology as the basis for a critique of modernity"[5] is what principally, despite the explicit identification of *Telos* (especially in its early years) with the left, distinguishes *Telos* from other Marxist journals and the associated intellectual tendencies that predominated in the United States and Europe in the latter half of the 20th century.

In order to understand the intellectual trajectory of *Telos*, from its inception in the late 1960s when its contents evinced a commitment to the revision of a deeply flawed Marxism and to guidance of a parochial, doctrinaire American left to its eventual engagement with heterodox philosophy difficult to situate on the traditional left-right axis, any investigator must begin with Paul Piccone himself. Piccone's interest in left-wing philosophy (and its inherent emphasis on effecting material/social improvement for the lot of the working class) and the manner in which this led towards theoretical engagement with illiberal thinkers from across the political spectrum are, in many ways, functions of Piccone's own background, both personal and theoretical.

The marked tendency among left-wing philosophers and intellectual producers to emerge from a bourgeois context (that furnished them with the material circumstances necessary to pursue such generally un-commodifiable activities, which is particularly evident in the background of early critical theorists) did not characterize Piccone's circumstances. Rather, Piccone was born into what might be regarded as a stereotypically proletarian background. The son of working-class Italians, Piccone was born in L'Aquila, Italy, in 1940 during the Second World War. His family immigrated to Rochester, New York in 1954, when Piccone was 14,

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[5] Ibid., 95.

where his father worked as a tailor— hardly the bourgeois-intellectual background typically associated with the production of esoteric, complex political philosophy. Understanding Piccone's proletarian background is essential insofar as it fundamentally informed his evaluation of the working-class and the orthodox program of revolutionary Marxists in the unrevised leftist tradition.

The centrality of phenomenology to Piccone's philosophical orientation—which will become clear throughout this analysis of his work—extended to his own experiences within the working class. In Russell Jacoby's essay, "Paul Piccone: Outside Academe," Piccone articulates his attitude towards leftist "clichés" regarding the revolutionary capacity of the modern working class : "We knew the 'proletariat' all too well to harbor any illusions about its alleged emancipatory potential."[6] Piccone understood the pretensions of the intellectual elite as manifested in the unrealistic fantasies harbored by members of the intelligentsia that carefully constructed members of the working class as a timeless revolutionary vanguard, serving the same purpose in the context of late-20th century postindustrial capitalism as they did—or were supposed to have—served in the 19th century. Piccone, therefore, was immune to the sort of externality and paternalism associated with bourgeois philosophizing about the nature of the inevitable proletarian revolution, an immunity that would foster and perpetuate his unorthodox interpretations of revolutionary change and its necessity. This attitude, distinct from other revolutionary theoreticians, is clear even in his early work.

Piccone is also distinguished from other critical theorists and academics concerned with the construction of qualitatively different, alternative methods of social organization in that Piccone—and *Telos*—labored almost entirely outside of the academic sphere, and *Telos* was not

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[6] Ibid., 59.

explicitly associated with any particular institution or revenue source. Piccone, though academically trained, earning a PHD in in Philosophy from the University of SUNY-Buffalo in 1970,[7] spent the significant majority of his productive life outside of the academic sphere, publishing *Telos* independently, sustaining it via a combination of, in Russel Berman's words, "subscription income, the dedication of the participants, and the self-exploitation of the editor [Piccone]"[8]— all premised on the continuing, passionate engagement of those who read and published in *Telos*. The maintenance of this engagement in the pre-digital era manifested itself in the formation of *Telos* reading groups throughout the United States and Canada, which allowed *Telos* to maintain an active connection to the effervescent intellectual life of universities in the 1960s and 70s without being bound by the discursive restrictions. *Telos* was able to inhabit an unrestricted "life-world for ideas that exist outside the ivory tower,"[9] which was, for both Piccone and Berman, a stultifying and intellectually restrictive context. Not being subject to the institutional whims of increasingly politicized Universities, which Piccone would consistently identify with the vested interests of the bourgeoisie and those bound by the totally administered system, allowed them (or cultivated the perception that it allowed them) to explore concepts that would otherwise be subject to social opprobrium so significant it would not be pursued in an institutional context.

Telos was founded 1968 when Piccone, a graduate student, "physically produced the magazine from his basement…preparing camera-ready pages and delivering them to the printer" and coercing other participants into performing the procedural drudgery associated with the

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[7] Tim Luke,"The Trek with *Telos*: A Rememberance of Paul Piccone," (January 19, 1940-July 12, 2004), Fast Capitalism no. 1.2, n.d., http://www.uta.edu/huma/agger/fastcapitalism/1_2/luke.htm (accessed January 2018).

[8] Agger and Luke, *A Journal of No Illusions,* 96.

[9] Ibid., 96.

actual act of distributing *Telos.* In the '70s, after completing his PHD, Piccone continued as the

editor of and a contributor to *Telos* alongside his teaching duties as a professor in the Department

of Sociology at Washington University in St. Louis, where he worked until he was denied tenure

in 1977,[10] marking Piccone's permanent break with academic institutions and, perhaps, partially

explaining his perennial cynicism regarding the capacity of universities and student-led

movements to maintain an authentic spirit of inquiry.

Piccone was not merely the editor of *Telos*, serving not just as an, if not neutral, then

intellectually curious arbiter of inclusion, but also as the driving force behind the intellectual

trends in which *Telos* was immersed. The consensus that emerges among participants in early

Telos groups, and those who worked with Piccone directly, paints a picture of a man whose

dynamic and bombastic personality was a significant guiding factor in determining the future of

Telos and the nature of the publications within it. Virtually no participant in the *Telos* project,

writing in retrospect, is willing or able to divorce *Telos* and its tendencies from the individual

persona of Piccone. If on nothing else, given the variegated and combative multitude of writers

published in *Telos,* there appears to exist some consensus on the centrality of Piccone and his

procedural idiosyncrasies to *Telos.* He is described, variously, as a man "who lived exclusively

for ideas, free of professional, familial and personal vanities"[11] and a "Nietzschean figure" who

"philosophized with a hammer,"[12] whose "candid style, dynamism, imagination, combativeness,

and human qualities commanded the loyalty of his circle and shaped the journal's tone, direction,

and contents."[13]

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 51.

[12] Ibid., 70.

[13] Ibid., 25.

The image of Piccone evoked by his closer associates is a contradictory one. Equal parts radical and personally conventional, Piccone would cajole, harangue, shout, and swear, engaging his intellectual rivals vehemently and with gusto, while simultaneously producing measured scholarly work, maintaining a personal affability that seemed to be centered around long, meandering dinners and discussions. He was an "outsider who refused to knuckle under…who would tell a friend as easily as a professional superior that a piece he or she had just written stank."[14] Contributor Russell Jacoby's initial impression was of a man who coexisted with the radicalism of the 1960s—and in many senses, at least intellectually, perpetuated and furthered that radicalism—but who manifested a personal style that radicals of the era found almost shocking: "…clean shaven, with slicked-back hair, he wore a fine suit and polished, leather, [sic] shoes."[15] Despite Piccone's unconventional political sympathies, he cultivated an apparently conservative personal style, sartorially, intellectually, and in his unrelentingly demanding interactions with those for whom he had intellectual respect: "Nothing one had written was ever good enough, no paper one edited had been done thoroughly enough….and no amount of trouble taken on behalf of him and his various obsessions was ever acknowledged except in a backhanded way."[16]

The figure of Paul Piccone, then, looms large in the consciousness of the writers and participants in *Telos* and its annual conferences; they all agree, however, despite their many ideological distinctions, that to write about *Telos* necessarily includes writing about Piccone, who was not merely a scholastically vivacious and active individual but also a creative theoretician in his own right, using the space he had carved out in *Telos* to advance and express

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[14] Ibid.*,* 60.
[15] Ibid., 59.
[16] Ibid., 51.

new models for understanding the contradictions and socially deleterious characteristics of Liberal capitalism and the contemporary incarnations of left- and right-wing thought, which he would ultimately seek to programmatically transcend in search of his hopeful— almost utopian—understanding of the possibility for the imposition of transnational qualitative socioeconomic change. Piccone's capacity to step outside the ideological parameters of existing discourses was the foundation for his most enduring contributions to the field of intellectual history and philosophy, most notably his theory of artificial negativity, a broad evaluation of the tendency of Liberal Capitalism to internalize even its most vociferous opponents, and his specific articulation of the phenomenon of a "new class" of entrenched bureaucrats, with which he identified the new left, traditional statist right, and administrative class of university faculty, administrators, and other individuals with a significant interest in the maintenance of the status quo, or at least its central elements.

Telos moved to its permanent and contemporary home in New York in the early 1980s— the date of the move is not furnished in any sources—and began to manifest the intellectual shift away from traditional left-right axes as part of a broader response to Reaganism and the prevailing forces of global neoliberalism. It is important to understand, however, that *Telos*' supposed rightward shift was not a product of ideological change or some sort of partisan inversal—the journals engagement with controversial thinkers, particularly Carl Schmitt, was the result of the instrumental value Piccone perceived in their writings. As Piccone refined his individual philosophy, increasingly believing the traditional political dichotomy was an anachronism incapable of addressing the systematic alienation inherent to late-industrial modernity, he began to conceive of the ideal society—one which would manifest the qualitative, illiberal change with which Piccone was so concerned—in terms that intersected with

conservative, and especially Schmittean, understandings of the nature of identity and society in modern Liberal societies. Piccone perceived the growth of self-interested groups, those who engaged in what might be deemed "identity politics," as a profound threat to organic autonomy orchestrated by the "New Class," the bureaucratic clerisy responsible for the all-consuming artificial negativity that sustained liberal discourses.

This perception of identity politics as a dangerous tendency appropriated by the elite to sustain a fractured society, in which communal autonomy was quashed in order to perpetuate neoliberal exploitation, is interpreted by many of the old-guard *Telos* contributors as, at the very least, profoundly problematic—in the words of Robert Antonio, a *Telos* contributor and associate of Piccone's from 1976 onward—it was a "reduction of human rights discourses, initiatives, and protections to New Class drivers of domination" that led Piccone to bizarre equivalencies, once comparing the US civil rights movement to the Holocaust. Simultaneously, Piccone's preoccupation with the exclusive genuine manifestation of authentic society as being expressed in what he deemed "organic communities" fueled a broad rejection of universalism, and instead implied "populist local autonomy should be the rule everywhere."[17] It is critical to understand that Piccone's criticisms of the Liberal extension of fundamental rights (as expressed by their codification by the state) was, in his thinking, symptomatic of trends that deprived communities of their cultural distinctiveness and left them open to systematic exploitation, and did not emanate from racial animus or a belief in the necessity of hierarchical arrangements.

Since its relocation to New York, *Telos* has occupied the same offices for several decades, and continued to simultaneously engage with unorthodox or "conservative" thinkers as well as its perennial project of translation and explication of continental, particularly Eastern European,

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[17] Ibid., 38-39.

philosophers who had yet to be translated into English. Indeed, prior to *Telos'* (and Piccone's) instrumental use of conservative philosophy, *Telos* had eschewed orthodox Marxism, and the soviet apologetics with which it was associated during the 1960s-70s among the western left, in favor of "an abiding, serious interest in these largely forgotten, ignored, or suppressed traditions of Marxist critique that been frozen over by the Cold War."[18] These two tendencies coexist in *Telos* throughout the course of its publication under Piccone—arguably reaching a crescendo, in terms of coexistence and proportionate importance within *Telos* during the 1980s—and the spirit of universal criticism was studiously maintained after Piccone's untimely death from cancer in 2004.

Perhaps the most difficult part of any examination of *Telos* and its intellectual shift is determining the degree of broad, enduring relevance the publication of such a diverse and occasionally esoteric collection of translations, sociological essays, and philosophical-political theorizing contained within *Telos*. Though *Telos* was self-sustaining, and remains so to this day, in terms of pure circulation it certainly did not rise to the level of other eminent scholarly publications meant for mass consumption—though no figures are immediately available, *Telos* subscriptions have generally been limited, it appears, to academic institutions and a relatively small but zealous group of interested parties and contributors. However, reach in terms of mere circulation is not an ideal metric for determining the relevance of *Telos*, situated as it was at the confluence of academia and non-university geopolitical/philosophical discussions—*Telos*, in the words of Elisabeth Chaves, "…practiced theory for theory's sake, and this placed the journal farther away from other publications more directly influenced by or positioned within the

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[18] Ibid., 4.

economic and political fields."[19] *Telos*, at the very least, distinguished itself from other

ostensibly academic journals by its degree of theoretical distinctiveness and chronologically

broad intellectually heritage, which was occupied with the continuing importance of reevaluating

philosophers from the 19th century onwards, a stark contrast to academic journals that "reference

and honor" a political/intellectual heritage from "the past five to or ten years, where *Telos* looked

to the past fifty or hundred years."[20] In other words, *Telos*—like Piccone—situated itself outside

of the mainstream, and many former participants and contributors cite its importance in terms of

its uniqueness and its capacity to introduce scholars to otherwise ignored realms of Marxian

critique.

Like the work of the Frankfurt School and *Die Weltbuhne Circle*, the significance of

Telos is belied by its apparently small group of contributors and lack of institutional backing.

From 1968 onward, *Telos* carved out a place for itself in the world of radical politics,

constituting an influential medium for the exchange of ideas that would otherwise have remained

relatively unknown or unanalyzed. My exploration of *Telos* intellectual history here stands on

the shoulders of giants, who similarly recognized the importance of evaluating political

philosophical pursuits in the broadest sense so that we may, collectively, ascertain a more

complete understanding of the complex intersections between theory, praxis, and the concrete

world we occupy. Mid-20th century left-wing intellectual movements, particularly those that

were contemporary to Piccone's early writing and emphasized a tradition of critical cultural

analysis, have exerted a tremendous influence on western cultural conflicts, particularly in an era

characterized by an increasingly globalized transnational workforce and concerns vis-à-vis the

maintenance of idiosyncratic cultural characteristics in wealthy countries. The personal

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[19] Ibid., 177.
[20] Ibid.

ideological trajectory of significant public intellectuals has been explored and contextualized with regard to manifestations of "rightward" shifts similar to that of *Telos* in the 1980s—such as David Hororwitz and Christopher Hitchens, both of whom began their careers as fairly orthodox Socialists and have spent the twenty-first century as prominent neo-Conservative commentators.[21]

The goal, therefore, of this paper is not to determine whether or not *Telos* had a substantive impact on the American political discourse, or to determine the degree to which the unique ideas and translations published exclusively in its pages penetrated or influenced the mainstream; instead, it is to treat *Telos* as a historical entity, with an intellectual mission defined by both the context in which it was produced (which, of course, changed the direction of Piccone's ideas) and the editorial guidance of Piccone himself. Instead, my intention is to evaluate and understand the trajectory of *Telos* as expressed via shifts in its intellectual focus, particularly regarding Piccone's unique theories of the New Class and Artificial Negativity, which were increasingly central to his—and *Telos'*—work after the late 1970s. In the words of Russell Berman, in "The Editor, the Journal, the Project," an essay in *A Journal of No Illusions*, there is an as-yet unaddressed "interpretative challenge" in the historiography of *Telos*—"to tease out the difference between the imprint of the founder, an editorial version of authorial intent, and the relative autonomy or indeterminacy of the journal itself. *Telos* was unthinkable without Piccone, but *Telos* was not only Piccone."[22] It is my intention to address the fundamental questions packed into Berman's interpretative challenge—how did *Telos* change over time, and

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[21] Daniel Oppenheimer, *Exit Right: The People Who Left the Left and Reshaped The American Century*, (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2016).

[22] Agger and Luke, *A Journal of No Illusions,* 93.

what was the relationship between Paul Piccone's idiosyncratic, illiberal, socio-historical philosophy and intellectual approach and the intellectual reorientations of the journal itself?

In order to accomplish this, my intention is to evaluate *Telos* in two distinct chronological periods, in order to draw out the distinctions between the early years of *Telos* and the period after the introduction of Piccone's concepts of the New Class and Artificial Negativity. The scope of this project does not permit, in practical terms, a full and comprehensive survey of *Telos* on the whole or even within the chronological framework I have selected—this is due to the breadth and density of the content published in *Telos* which, in contrast to other sources, is generally self-contained and requires the internalization of a specific philosophical vernacular and referential dialect to understand and interpret its articles. My principal focus will be on pieces directly relevant to the broader ideological structure of *Telos* itself, meaning I will exclude foreign language articles, reviews of contemporary scholarship, and assorted pieces that, while substantive, do not speak directly to the orientation of the journal itself. Given the centrality of Piccone to *Telos* prior to 2004, it is my contention that Piccone's pieces—and the prefaces, editorial notes, etc.—speak most directly to the philosophical-historical "mission" of the *Telos* project.

Therefore, my first chapter will cover *Telos* from its first issue, in the Spring of 1968, to the fall of 1973, a five-year span that is largely characterized by an intense focus on the revitalization of Marxist analysis via new interpretations of dialectical reasoning and revised Marxist thought, largely emanating from Italian and German theoreticians of the early 20th century. There are several critical pieces written by Piccone during this period that demonstrate the depth of his engagement with Marxist theory, and provide a substantive comparative baseline

with which to contrast Piccone's later work, which evinces a fundamentally different approach to Marxism and social theory broadly.

My second chapter will be devoted to the writings of Paul Piccone and other anti-liberal pieces published in *Telos* from immediately prior to its move to New York until the mid-1980s, from 1977 to 1984. In this chapter, I will emphasize explanations of Piccone's concepts of the New Class and Artificial Negativity, contextualized within the rising tide of Thatcherism/Reaganism and the prevailing Washington Consensus. Piccone's unique theoretical assertions will be articulated in terms of their relationship to the rising neoliberal tide (and *Telos'* coexisting exploration of illiberal and anti-Liberal ideologies that may be regarded as right-wing), and I will explore the degree to which other significant published works within *Telos* reflect Piccone's editorial direction, undertaken in the course of *Telos'* break with neo-Marxist theory.

The fundamental relevance of this material to American political philosophy is significant. In much the same manner as the Frankfurt school, whose work increasingly reflected "a growing loss of that basic confidence, which Marxists had traditionally felt, in the revolutionary potential of the proletariat"[23] as the Institute for Social Research grew in the interwar period and became increasingly influential, so too did *Telos* depart from the existing truisms and political assumptions of the mid-20th century and embark on a singularly unique intellectual journey. Indeed, the similarities between the thinkers of the Frankfurt School and those would contribute to *Telos* is difficult to miss. Both groups concerned themselves with the revision of insufficient past doctrines and with the disruption of mass capitalism—perhaps more poignantly, however, both the *Telos* cadre and the principal contributors to the early publications of the Frankfurt School were preoccupied with deconstruction of social phenomenon that did not

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[23] Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1973), 44.

necessarily manifest themselves in an exclusively material way. Or, in the words of Martin Jay, the early critical theorists felt that "All valid experience for the social theorist.. ought not to be reduced to the controlled observation of the laboratory", an assumption that shares an essential skepticism with Piccone and *Telos'* approach to the concept of rationality in late-capitalist society.[24]

Furthermore, the *Institut* of the Frankfurt School was often occupied with not just the nature of exploitation under capitalism—which was understood, largely, as a fundamental characteristic of the system—but the ways in which the system perpetuated itself and strategically attenuated or managed the exploitation of the working class in a manner that reduced the possibility of external revolutionary action. Concepts articulated by writers in the Frankfurt School, in their analysis of both fascism and liberalism, are parallel to those expressed by *Telos* writers, particularly with regard to economic rationalization[25] and the capacity for bourgeois society to exert a totalizing dominance over society in general, along with general dissatisfaction with ostensibly socialist regimes such as the Soviet Union.[26] The most significant divergence between the writers of the Frankfurt School and Piccone is that *Telos* rarely focused on the cultural and artistic criticisms of Adorno, but generally concerned themselves with philosophical and geopolitical questions.

Similarly influential is Istvan Deak's work, *Weimar's Left Wing Intellectuals*, published in 1968. Like Martin Jay's *The Dialectical Imagination* (1973), it was published in the same era that *Telos* came into its own and the American left began a long period of self-examination and ideological reorientation. In Deak's book, like in Jay's, the significance of left-wing intellectual

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[24] Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 82.
[25] Ibid., 153.
[26] Ibid., 256.

developments is clearly articulated via a clear examination of the reverberating effects of philosophical efforts. While the writers for *Die Weltbuhne,* a German communist publication notable for the participation of important writers like Kurt Tucholsky—were few in number, their influence was significant, and they exerted considerable ideological pressure on the left-wing parties of interwar Germany. In much the same fashion as the writers of the Frankfurt School, the philosophers, literary critics, playwrights, and politicians that contributed to *Die Weltbuhne* were at the forefront of changing intellectual attitudes towards the essential pursuits of left-wing politics and the revision of longstanding tautologies upon which those politics had always been predicated.

Chapter 1: Telos: 1968-1973―Dialectical Materialism, Phenomenology, and Neo-Marxist Thought

The early years of *Telos* are characterized by an impressive variety of publication, the significant majority related—at least tangentially—to the application of Marxist theoretical paradigms to phenomenon both contemporary and historical, along with typical *Telos* translations of eminent continental philosophers who had yet to reach wide circulation among western, English-speaking audiences. The scope of content, despite the small scale of readership (manifested mostly, in the beginning, in small groups of Piccone's associates, known as *Telos* groups, and populated by the self-deprecatingly titled "Telosers,"[27] is broad and touches upon a surprisingly disparate range of topics. For the purposes of my analysis, however, I have chosen to confine myself largely to the writings of Piccone himself—in his role as editor and, in the first few years, a chief generator of content, Piccone unambiguously guided *Telos* along its intellectual trajectory in the late 60s and early 70s, and demonstrates the uniqueness of Piccone's interpretative stances.

Piccone's writings—particularly in 1968—evoke the image of a philosopher with a predilection for what he regards as something of a mirror image of the cult of scientism/hyperrationalism that Piccone associated with liberalism and thus excoriated. Instead, Piccone situated himself at the confluence of political philosophy, with its associated abstractions, and historical reasoning, characterized by the rigorous and logical identification of causality and the attribution of historical forces or trends to a direct line of discernable phenomenon. This would remain a mainstay of Piccone's thinking for the rest of his life, and, though he was not formally trained in historical writing, it would be impossible to understand

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[27] Agger and Luke, *A Journal of No Illusions,* 64.

Piccone without acknowledging the degree to which a desire for historicity exerted an influence upon his writing. It is also critical to note that historical mindedness is fundamentally distinct from the scholastic historiographic rigor that typically characterizes historical work, and Piccone does not adhere to the evidential and interpretative standards inherent to academic historical writing, lending his assertions—particularly those made in the very first issue of *Telos*, in his flagship essay—problematic in their particulars.

Before analyzing the contents of the articles I have deemed worthy for inclusion in this (though virtually every piece published in *Telos* merits scrutiny, and the first issue alone is sufficiently content rich to constitute a major undertaking in its own right), it is important to note that Piccone, beyond his aptitude for (if occasionally flawed) philosophical reasoning, is also a profoundly skilled rhetorician. *Telos*, throughout the course of its life, was notable for an unwillingness to countenance jargon for the sake of jargon, i.e., the obfuscation of meaning via the deployment of academic vernacular profoundly repulsed Piccone and other *Telos* contributors[28]. This aversion to unnecessary pseudo-profundity or otherwise impenetrable syntax, of course, is relative, and Piccone's writing may be more accessible than other modern Marxist philosophers, it nevertheless manifests a complexity of syntax and reasoning consonant with the subjects it addresses. It distinguishes itself, however, by merit of its syntactical "tightness," in that a reader rarely feels that Piccone has embellished his language to little effect. Indeed, Piccone's writing is characterized by a distinct voice, which is at once trenchant, insightful, bombastic, and carefully procedural. It is this "voice" that, in my mind, sets Piccone apart from his contemporaries—he simultaneously affects scholastic substance and a rapier-sharp wit, the latter embodied in his tendency to end pieces or subsections with epigrammatic flourish.

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[28] Ibid., 26.

This first chapter, therefore, will analyze the writings of Paul Piccone in *Telos* between 1968 and 1973 with a particular focus on three elements—the ideological content of the articles (the degree to which they appear to adhere to Marxist reasoning), the specific content of the relevant articles, and the "Picconean element" (the manifestations of his unique literary voice and specific interpretations, or precursors to them, in his early writing.) Each piece of writing published by Piccone in *Telos* in these years can be analyzed through these lenses, and it would be difficult to divorce Piccone's writings in this period from the historical characteristics of Marxist reasoning and his idiosyncratically bellicose orientation. In order to best demonstrate the chronological arc of *Telos*' ideological orientation, I will analyze Piccone's writings in the order in which they were published.

Spring 1968—Towards a Socio-Historical Interpretation of the Scientific Revolution

Published in 1968, in the very first edition of *Telos*, Piccone's "socio-historical interpretation" of the intellectual influence exerted by the growth of empiricism in the Western world is a fascinatingly pure manifestation of Piccone's unique reasoning and emphasis on the confluence of social-material factors in determining and diagnosing the illnesses of contemporary Liberalism. For Piccone, like most thinkers in the tradition of revised Marxism that predominated in the late 1960s among *Telos* adherents,[29] the crass materialism of earlier eras had been (despite his rejection of the identitarian descendants of postmodern reasoning) attenuated by the inclusion of immaterial factors in their reasoning. His first essay appearing in *Telos* emphasizes not only the role of material factors, always paramount in Marxist-influenced reasoning, but also of discursive factors concerning the manner in which the great masses of western society, influenced by intellectual trends from the renaissance onwards, perceived and

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[29] Ibid., 4.

understood the world in which they inhabited. "The fact," wrote Piccone, "that our scientifically-oriented culture is fundamentally irrational has not generated much thinking."[30] Piccone was disturbed by the perennial irrationality he perceived in Western intellectuality, and attempted to identify and diagnose the social-historical factors that had perpetuated that irrationality.

In Piccone's view, contemporary philosophy and society reflected the degree to which modern reasoning had failed to reckon with the spectres of irrational and supernatural belief that continued to assert themselves in modern society, instead emphasizing a detached and programmatic justification of the "philosophy of science without paying the least attention to what continental observers call 'the crisis of philosophy and culture.'"[31] For Piccone, this crisis had its roots in (like many deleterious intellectual/ideological trends in the west), the broad trend of empiricization and positivism that began to characterize scientific, historical, and philosophical inquiry in the post-Renaissance European order. His perspective in this regard is thoroughly Husserlian,[32] concerned with the "concrete man" and the *Lebenswelt* (life-world) he occupies, which had been thoroughly and decisively "occluded" by the tendency for empiricism to "mathematize" reality and reconstitute it according to empirical conclusions drawn by observation of natural law.[33] In other words, through what Piccone regards as a "diabolical dialectical reversal", the rise of "Galilean science" (synonymous with arithmetical and empirical reasoning) was rendered "the most effective reifier of precisely that *Lebenswelt* it was meant to

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[30] Paul Piccone, "Towards a Socio-Historical Interpretation of the Scientific Revolution," *Telos* no.1, (1968): 16, http://journal.telospress.com/content/1968/1.toc. (accessed October 2016).
[31] Ibid.
[32] Edmund Husserl was a German philosopher writing around the turn of the 20th century, who was principally concerned with the constitution of a "science covering a new field of experience, exclusively its own…an independent realm of direct experience." Phenomenology broadly concerns itself with human experience and the extraction of meaning from concrete life events rather than exclusively deductive reasoning. (Edmund Husserl: Ideas, XXXIV).
[33] Piccone, "Towards a Socio-Historical Interpretation of the Scientific Revolution," 16.

change", rendering man a mere "thing among things", a crass objectification of the concrete individual into a measurable phenomenon.

For Piccone, the vitality of the life-world occupied by man, and the subjective multitude of experiences examined by Husserlian phenomenology, had been eradicated in favor of bland teleology. Piccone uses Husserlian reasoning to define phenomenology, which posits an essentially dialectical manner by which an individual interacts with the universe he or she occupies; as a "fact-world" apprehended by the individual and existing outside of them, subject to the possibility of change via the capacity to doubt, and, subsequently, to understand. Put simply, his understanding of phenomenology acknowledges the objective existence of what might be deemed reality but situates the individual experience within "the nature setting" and "presented in experience as real, taken completely 'free from theory', just as it is in reality experienced…" and therefore not inherently subject to the hyperrationalism which Piccone finds so troublesome.[34]

Drawing upon the work of Antonio Banfi, a celebrated Italian Marxist philosopher who also analyzed Galilean empiricism[35], and Georg Lukàcs[36] (whose translations appeared in *Telos* with some regularity from the very beginning), Piccone articulates the shortcomings he perceives in Husserl and Banfi's attempts to address the so-called "crisis" in western philosophy. In Piccone's view, both Banfi and Husserl fail to "take into full account the historicity of the crisis,

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[34] Edmund Husserl. *Husserl: Ideas.* Translated by W.R. Boyce Gibson. (New York, NY: Routledge), 60.

[35] Drawing on two of Banfi's works: "Husserl e la Crisi della Civilta Europea" (1958) and "Vita Di Galileo Galilei" (1962, Milan).

[36] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. "Georg Lukács." last modified January 18, 2018. http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/lukacs. For this essay, Lukács' *Histoire et Conscious de Classe* (Paris, 1960). Georg Lukàcs, a Austro-Hungarian born and educated Marxist philosopher and early critical theorist, exerted a significant influence on Western Marxism broadly and Piccone specifically, and much of his writing was published (both translated and in its original Italian and Hungarian) in *Telos*.

i.e., its *determinate* socio-historical nature"[37], the identification of which is Piccone's chief goal in this piece. Perhaps more than any other single sentence, the preceding quotation encapsulates the tendencies by which Piccone's thought would be characterized, a focus on Husserlian experiential phenomenology, a breathtaking fluency in the works of continental Marxism (coupled with thorough criticism of their underpinnings) and a deep concern with historical contingency. Furthermore, the influence of traditional Marxist thought exerts itself in the determinism by which Piccone interprets historical causality—though not exclusively material, emanates from existing structures understood (by way of Lukács) in relation to society and its structures in general. [38]

In order to demonstrate the manner in which contemporary western society has erected an irascible, unscalable barrier between the concrete life of man, expressed phenomenologically through faith and existential reckonings, and the abstracted world of philosophical ideas, expressed intellectually in the sciences and philosophy, Piccone posits a Cartesian dyad established by the Catholic church in an attempt to resuscitate its intellectual hegemony in the wake of the emergence of Copernican destabilization of Catholic cosmology and the political disintegrations of the reformation. Interestingly, he contrasts the emergence of the empirical Galilean system with its intellectual antecedent, Scholasticism, which he perceives as having "harmonized man and society to a degree unknown since that time,"[39] diminished over time by the plenitude of urbanization and the life-patterns encouraged by the growth of an urban elite.

This dyadic structure resulted from the "compromise" of Galilean science with religious institutions, whereupon scientific inquiry "became restricted to matters of fact…leaving

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[37] Piccone, "Towards a Socio-Historical Interpretation of the Scientific Revolution," 18.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

untouched matters of religion", eliminating the threat posed to "dogma, tradition, and myth"[40] by the Humanistic spirit manifested in what Piccone calls the "homo universale" of the Rennaissance, or "the artist that was later to become the scientist" whose attempts at effecting "cultural synthesis" could not be tolerated by the Church alongside the threat of Protestantism, which he declared to be "an epiphenomenon of rising capitalism".[41] Thus the two threats that faced the Catholic church were conquered—the rise of less institutionalized theological rivals to the existing political-religious structure of Europe (themselves a result of, at least in Piccone's view, the rise of commodity exchange and the abstraction of value), and the revolutionary implications of unattenuated Galilean thought, the coopting of which enshrined a particular type of rationalism in the institutional structure of the western world.[42]

It is important to note, however, that Piccone's attribution of the institutionalization of irrationality, i.e., the enshrinement of religious understandings as not subject to the spirit of criticism seen in the artist cum scientist of the Renaissance, to Galilean science does not constitute a *prima facie* rejection of empiricism. Rather, it speaks to his perception of a genuine scientific revolution as having been essentially arrested in its development by the machinations of the Catholic Church as a response to Galilean science's implied "rejection of the split world of the Scholastics"[43] prior to its compromise by institutional forces. By suppressing Galileo, the Church "successfully put down what might have developed into a genuine scientific revolution"[44] and provided the structural basis for the perpetuation of mythology and, more importantly, subdivided the "concrete man" of earlier eras into a cascading, ever-growing series

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 22.
[44] Ibid., 23.

of subdivisions that reduced and fragmented those capable of universal criticism into mere technicians rather than what we might colloquially deem "Renaissance men."[45]

Piccone's argument reaches its crescendo—and clearly articulates a Marxist world-view—in his conclusion, which situates the failure of the concrete man (and his capacity to perceive the possibility of qualitative change) thoroughly within the class structure and the self-interest of the Italian bourgeoisie. Having initially perceived the revolutionary value of Galilean inquiry—in terms of their own class interest, i.e., the supplanting of the feudal order with a modern bourgeois social structure—the Italian merchant class provided patronage for the sustenance of the University of Padua, from which a number of critical intellectual gadflies (e.g., Copernicus and Galileo) emerged. It was only once they began to threaten the "more sophisticated irrationalities of the bourgeois establishment" that they were suppressed and reduced, permanently, to a class of technicians rather than concrete men.[46] It is to this reduction that Piccone attributes the "malaise of this century, its nihilism and loss of meaning" which can be only be understood via a Husserlian-Marxist analysis which pulls out the degree to which "[the crisis] can thus be seen as another appendage of the ideological superstructure" of capitalism and bourgeois rationalism. [47]

In many senses, Piccone's first piece in *Telos* would telegraph, with some exceptions, the thought patterns by which his work would be characterized throughout the course of *Telos'* early years. Indeed, perhaps the only element missing from Piccone's analysis of the scientific revolution—which evinces a focus on Marxist-influenced perceptions of causality, structure-superstructure relationships, and the centrality of epistemological discourses in understanding the

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[45] Ibid., 25.
[46] Ibid., 25-26.
[47] Ibid., 26.

impact of knowledge production on society—is that of dialectical historical reasoning, which he would address tenaciously in the subsequent issue of *Telos*, and which would remain central to his reasoning throughout the course of the Marxist phase of *Telos'* intellectual trajectory. It is because of the degree to which, in a sense, "Towards a Socio-Historical Understanding of the Scientific Revolution" represents a "pure" Picconean analysis that it merits a more thorough reading and evaluation than other pieces written by Piccone for *Telos*. Furthermore, the historicity of "Towards a Socio-Historical Understanding of the Scientific Revolution" is profoundly questionable, and evinces what might be regarded as axiomatic reasoning emanating from both an *a priori* hostility to religious structures and towards hyperrationalism, which are pervasive elements in Piccone's writing—a desire to instrumentalize history, often to the detriment of what might be a coherent philosophical argument had its validity not been attenuated by poor historiographic reasoning.

This generalized focus on examining political realities through a socio-historical lens is premised on a broader philosophical understanding of history as not merely a series of events open to interpretation within materialistic parameters. Instead, historical reasoning, in Telos' early years, is generally presented by both Piccone and other authors in a pseudo-Hegelian fashion alloyed by contemporary notions of *Geist* as a material, rather than abstract, reckoning. "Man, and only man" wrote Karel Kosek in *Telos'* Spring 1969 issue, "realizes himself in history. Consequently, history is not tragic, but the tragic is in history; it is not absurd, but the absurd arises in history."[48] Human activity is, for Kosek and Piccone alike, influenced by abstractions (such as cultural or religious characteristics), but not dictated by providential spirit; the reason, or spirit, articulated by Hegel does not exist independently but only through human action, and thus

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[48] Karel Kosik, "Reason and History," *Telos*, no. 3, (Spring 1969): 69, *Telos* online archive http://journal.telospress.com/content/1969/3.toc (accessed October 2016).

a formulation where man is subject to immanent and immutable structures "fails to dialectize historical reason in a consequential way."[49] In such a framework, all actions (being predetermined) must be rational, and therefore the capacity for human irrationality to assert itself in the process of self-construction is not acknowledged, and history is thus misapprehended in its totality. "Man realizes himself, i.e., he humanizes himself, in history", wrote Kosek, which demonstrates the fundamental degree to which historical events are merely the "unfolding of possibilities in time" resulting from the confrontation inherent in the dialectic.[50] This rationalization (though not in the Galilean-empirical sense) underpins the notion of socio-historical causation as manifested in *Telos*.

This is consonant with Marxist conceptions of dialectical movement precipitated by moments of social self-consciousness precipitated by world-historical events and individuals (having jettisoned the abstractions of pure Hegelianism). In the Spring of 1969, this particular concept was elaborated upon not just by Piccone in "Towards a Socio-Historical Understanding of the Scientific Revolution," but also by other participants in *Telos*. Finally, and perhaps most critically, it manifests a singular focus on qualitative change, which would characterize Piccone even after his engagement with "organic" religious and community structures in *Telos'* later years—the notion that, in order to reform society, the reformer must operate outside of the paradigms established by existing discourses. Indeed, "Towards a Socio-Historical Revolution", and the undergirding thematic reverence for the so-called "concrete man" and his capacity to critically engage, even with the sacrosanct, speaks to the spirit of universal criticism so central to Picconean reasoning.

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[49] Kosik, "Reason and History," 68.
[50] Ibid., 69.

Fall 1968—Dialectical Logic Today

The Picconenean tendency to express the necessity of revolutionary revisions, or holistic restructurings, of historical interpretations and philosophical axioms is similarly manifested in a manner that would remain characteristic of his writing—that is, he is preoccupied principally with the philosophical undergirding of contemporary socialist thought and the morbid paralysis imposed upon it by the dominance of the Soviet state's interpretation of Orthodox Marxism as a medium of illegitimate domination. Despite his Marxist orientation, Piccone is, at this point, some variation of unorthodox leftist, and clearly identifies with the fundamental notion of dialectical reasoning as critical to understanding the past and, thusly, the contemporary state of affairs. His analysis in "Dialectical Logic Today" equates the hegemony of the United States and the Soviet Union as essentially identical phenomenon differentiated only by carefully constructed ideological facades. He is most concerned, however, with purpose of dialectical logic in the maintenance of the status quo in both the Soviet Union and the West, and perceives a crisis in the employment of what he then perceived (dialectical logic) as central to any valid socio-historical understanding of contemporary geopolitics.

In the Soviet Union, though dialectical materialism remained state-enshrined, Piccone sees it as having stagnated, reduced to the "peripheral status" of an "abstract and formal discipline,"[51] abused to reconcile the "divergent theory and practices" of a militant and repressive Soviet state.[52] Simultaneously, in the West, the ideological hegemony of Liberalism, which "sees formal democracy as the final embodiment of human freedom" and therefore immune to revision and, thus, renders it incompatible with dialectical logic which implies the possibility of quantitative change. Echoing what would later coalesce into Piccone's theory of

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[51] Paul Piccone, 1968, "Dialectical Logic Today," *Telos* 38-83, no. 2 (Fall 1968): 39, *Telos* online archive, http://journal.telospress.com/content/1968/2.toc. (accessed October 2016).
[52] Piccone, "Dialectical Logic Today," 40.

artificial negativity, he notes the capacity of the liberal state to "collapse the rational into the real"[53], rendering the Liberal system axiomatic and all encompassing, a context in which any challenge to its hegemony—articulated in the form of teleology, perceived as something akin to natural law—can be dismissed as mere metaphysics. Thus he sees the geopolitical situation of the late 1960s as "an international fraud that straitjackets reality into two equally untenable ideological postures"[54] competing for international dominance.

As is typical for Piccone, his treatment of dialectical logic as a formal philosophy is largely in terms of its relevance to contemporary geopolitics and the fundamental goals of Marxist struggle, that is to say, the emancipation of the proletariat from the yoke of capital and its predatory, extractive methods imposed upon the third world. However, he similarly applies this paradigm to the bureaucratic system of soviet dominance, as predatory in Eastern Europe as the United States and its allies are in the context of the Vietnam war[55], seeing both the invasion of Vietnam and the suppression of the Czech revolution by the Soviet Union as methods by which both systems extend and reify themselves both geopolitically and ideologically. "In the same way that the US cannot win in Viet-nam," wrote Piccone, "the USSR cannot win in Eastern Europe."[56] Reading his work some fifty years after it was written, one cannot help but note the prescience of his predictions and his astute assessment of the obstacles advocates for qualitative change face while immersed in the "ideological smog"[57] created by the competition between the Liberal west and the bureaucratic USSR.

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[53] Ibid., 39.
[54] Ibid., 40.
[55] Ibid., 43.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 41.

Thus, Piccone concludes—in what will be a persistent theme of his philosophical work for the next seven years—any attempt to resolve or attenuate the perilous situation in which dialectical logic finds itself is via the reconciliation of formal dialectics and phenomenology, that is to say, both abstractions and reality must be accounted for, and the former cannot be elevated into the latter.[58] Piccone proceeds through several contemporary manifestations of ostensibly Marxist dialectics—the "empiricist" dialectic, in which all dialectic is seen as exclusively a thoughtform inapplicable to reality except as a theoretical, analytical framework, "compressing the dynamicity of reality into the abstract unchangeability of categorical data," the "existentialist dialectic," which by removing the object and reducing the dialectic exclusively to the subject (that is to say society without concern for the conditions that create social structures), imprisons itself in its own contemporary discourse; and finally, "Diamat," or the official Dialectic of the Soviet Union, which, in his view, disposes of the self-conscious subject critical to dialectical movement and change, creating a "mechanistic and deterministic framework for the dialectic, and the distortion of all the basic dialectical tenets."[59] In the absence of a self-conscious subject, the dialectic is eliminated, and reification and calcification become eternal—instead, writes Piccone, "what is needed is a dialectic which rejects outright to be restricted within the realm of thought alone" and creates conditions in which the subject can attain "concrete freedom…that transcends the abstract level of choice and obtains its concrete validation only in its practical implication of determinate alternatives."[60] To put it simply, Piccone believes qualitative, revolutionary change in either hegemonic system can be achieved only by a reciprocal

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[58] Ibid., 44.
[59] Ibid., 46.
[60] Ibid.

interaction between subject and object or society and structure that manifests itself meaningfully in the lived experiences of human beings.

Piccone proceeds to evaluate, in great detail, the notions of subject, object, and alienation as historical concepts, the latter of which has been distorted into a wide variety of psychological and philosophical reinterpretations, most notably the liberal interpretation of alienation as "a function of individual shortcomings," representing the maladjustment of an individual to an otherwise coherent social system (liberalism),[61] a form of apologetics devised to obfuscate the reality of alienation as a function of capitalist modes of production and distribution.[62] Further, he echoes his previous essay on the scientific revolution, identifying the mind-body dualism (in which the mind cannot apprehend the body, and thus the dialectic cannot manifest itself) produced by the enlightenment as the precursor to "extreme conservatism and a reactionary attitude in scientific matters where, e.g., all future developments in logical theory are ruled out and even the possibility of evolution in nature is denied," creating self-sustaining apologetics for the capitalist status quo, where "unreason becomes the precondition of reason." Using the "invisible hand" proposed by Adam Smith as an example, Piccone rearticulates his view that the enlightenment enshrined axiomatic irrationalities as the basis upon which all rational economic assertions must be made, thereby rendering all things derived from those fundamentally irrational as well.[63]

It is in this context of universal irrationality—manifesting itself in tangible suffering for great masses of people—that Piccone sees the possibility of the revival of human freedom. "Once capitalism develops the material conditions of an economy of abundance," wrote Piccone,

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[61] Ibid., 52.
[62] Ibid., 51.
[63] Ibid., 55-56.

"human freedom becomes a concrete historical possibility which, however, can only be brought about by means of a qualitative change of society's structure."[64] This possibility is remote, however, owing to the persistence of the neo-Kantian dualism, forces continual returns to "formal logic as the only logic" and the romantic dialectic as a mere medium of self-expression, reflecting the "fragmentary and meaningless character of modern existence in a capitalist or state-capitalist society."[65] Again, Piccone sees alienation and calcification premised on the perpetual subject-object disjunction as lying at the heart of misery in both the USSR and the industrialized West and preventing the advancement of a phenomenological dialectic concerned with concrete reality. In his mind, the solution "is to be found in the concrete universal," itself premised on the rejection of dualism.[66] For Piccone, ultimately, "To seek to avoid or bypass the dialectic invariably results in becoming trapped in one of its reified moments."[67]

Spring 1969—Students Protest, Class Structure, and Ideology

Piccone and *Telos* did not, however, focus exclusively upon philosophical abstractions (critical as they may be), and also subjected contemporaneous political phenomena to the same type of socio-historical analyses as they did historical trends. Writing in 1969, Piccone confronted the question of the growing student protest movement and the relationship of ostensibly radical demands for change in the context of a historical dialectic immersed in a hyper-parameterized society that imposed profound limitations on the transgressive capacity of mass movements. Though this precedes the articulation of the totally administered society,

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[64] Ibid., 61.
[65] Ibid., 64.
[66] Ibid., 69.
[67] Paul Piccone, "Students' Protest, Class-Structure, and Ideology," *Telos* 106-122, no. 3 (Spring 1969): 83, *Telos* online archive, http://journal.telospress.com/content/1969/3.toc (accessed October 2016).

"Students' Protest, Class Structure, and Ideology" indicates Piccone's growing awareness of the totalizing nature of Liberal value systems in late-capitalism American society. It also indicates an early willingness to accept strident criticism of the Soviet and Chinese systems—Piccone's principal assertion is that protest movements of the late 1960s were, whatever their immediate manifestation, borne out of a generalized (and universalized) opposition to stultifying bureaucracy.

"Whether one calls the object of their rebellion undimensionality, technistic alienation, or simply bureaucracy" wrote Piccone, "does not matter: the substance remains the same." [68] The object of large-scale education, particularly at the college level, is a social necessity in virtually every system—to prepare those in developed capitalist states for the next stage of economic activity and those in developed or developing states to attain the intellectual capital to enter into the world market and participate meaningfully, irrespective of individual national systems. Education at this level, however, was not merely mechanistic vocational training and thus "the educational sword was double edged," as "efforts to prepare large groups of young people to meet the new industrial requirements have resulted in counterfinalities that threaten the very foundation of the systems involved," having inadvertently equipped students with the capacity to recognize and confront pervasive iniquities.[69] Students, particularly those threatened by the draft and the Vietnam war, were "best positioned to comprehend the society's irrational character" and were *personally* subject to the existential threat of physical annihilation overseas.[70]

However, beyond this essential capacity to apprehend the systematic nature of late-capitalist contradictions, student protests are fundamentally compromised by their broad self-

[68] Ibid., 107.
[69] Ibid., 108.
[70] Ibid.,109.

perception, which is "catalytic in nature" and thus understood as likely to enflame the proletariat, but not as an inherently revolutionary group. In Piccone's view, this catalytic interpretation diverges from an objective reality in which the American proletariat "has long since ceased to be a progressive force," at least partially due to the cooptation of traditional proletarian organizing institutions (such as unions) by the transnational market.[71] This state of affairs, which Piccone regards as "likely to exist in the forseeable future" obviates both the revolutionary potential of the student movement—which premises its usefulness on its capacity to stimulate the permanently moribund American proletariat—and the proletarians themselves, who cannot escape integration into the system at large.[72] Furthermore, Piccone argues that the global proletariat is increasingly defanged and irrelevant in a future marked by "automation and cybernation," which has gradually diminished the productive significance of the traditional working class.[73]

Piccone also devotes considerable space to controversies surrounding civil rights, which he sees as essentially attenuating revolutionary potential by excluding black Americans from the proletarian category altogether, instead rendering them "subproletarian" and subjecting them to objectively different conditions than the integrated proletariat. For Piccone, "the negro problem…" was not a discrete issue but rather "an expression of the present American system's intrinsic inability to cope with technological advances," thereby creating a context in which the ever-diminishing industrial proletariat cannot be expanded to include black Americans. [74]

The solution, then, is to understand the space occupied by the student movement and to reorient its catalytic nature—rather than assuming student protests in the west will act as a

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[71] Ibid.,110.
[72] Ibid.,112.
[73] Ibid.,113.
[74] Ibid.,117.

catalyst to the independent assertion of interest by the working class. "The student movement, limited by its class-character," wrote Piccone, "will have to seek a catalytic role as a mediating agency between the bureaucratized party structure and the alienated working class,"[75] facilitating interactions between the two. In order for such an arrangement to manifest, however, the critical necessity is the establishment of "a new political party whose immediate goal is the disocclusion of the crisis of capitalism and of the crisis of man"[76] and the subsequent deconstruction of the no-longer occluded system.

While imperialism is secondary in his analysis of student protest movements (it is merely a reflection of the increasingly monopolistic, transnational system of exchange as manifested in conflicts like Vietnam), *Telos* also republished a significant essay by Lukács in this issue (alongside *Students' Protest*) that indicates the seriousness of *Telos*' concern with the role of the philosopher-student. The broadly educated and humanitarian-minded student in this conception acts as a mediator between the administrative system and the proletariat, and as a bulwark against the reconstitution of negative, previous stages of capitalist development.

Written in 1948 and republished 20 years later in *Telos*, Lukács' *On the Responsibility of Intellectuals* emphasizes the criticality of philosophical efforts in unmasking the agents of this potential reconstitution as manifestations of reaction, obfuscated in the United States by a masquerade in which "they carry out the suppression and exploitation of the masses in the name of humanity and culture,"[77] particularly via imperialist machinations.[78] Lukács asserts that the intelligentsia of 1948 "stands at a dividing point," faced with the option of intellectual

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[75] Ibid.,121.

[76] Ibid.,117.

[77] Georg Lukács, "On the Responsibility of Intellectuals," *Telos* 123-131, no.3 (Spring 1969): 126, *Telos* online archives, http://journal.telospress.com/content/1969/3.toc (accessed October 2016).

[78] Lukács, "On the Responsibility of Intellectuals," 125.

collaboration—like, in his model, German scholars such as Heidegger, Spengler, and other reactionaries—or, alternatively, to become "path-breakers and champions of a progressive turn in world history"[79] and therefore vindicate the concrete usefulness of the intellectual class. The publication of this particular work by Lukács alongside Piccone's analysis of student protest movements indicates a sort of didactic warning to contemporary philosophers reading *Telos* in 1969, particularly those in the context of a university—as potential catalytic mediators, the educated (despite their class interest) must comprehend the essential task of the anti-reactionary thinker.

Thus, for Piccone, the student protest movements represent a sliver of hope dictated by the intersection of material-economic interests and the particularities of monopoly capitalism. This is notable insofar as Piccone offers objective examples of what he believes constitute productive *praxis*—the constitution of an intersectional movement that participates in electoral politics—and also demonstrates the degree to which, prior to the full development of the notion of a totally administered society, Piccone believed in the possibility of qualitative change manifested by individuals with a vested interest in the administered system. At this stage in his intellectual development, the possibility of working-class organization facilitated by cooperation with bourgeois students, unified in opposition to the bureaucratic union and party system, effecting significant change remains very real.

Spring 1970: The Problem of Consciousness

Bridging the gap between his earlier works, which emphasize a somewhat more typically Marxist point of view, and his most important essay in this period "Phenomenological Marxism," Piccone addresses the notion of consciousness in the context of advanced capitalism

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[79] Ibid., 131.

and articulates the necessity for a contemporary approach, free of the 19th century and Leninist shackles by which Marxist understandings of consciousness (and therefore dialectics) had been previously bound. While he would go on to articulate precisely this model—and had been constructing it for some time, as elements of what would appear in "Phenomenological Marxism" appear both in "The Problem of Consciousness" and "Towards a Socio-Historical Understanding of the Scientific Revolution," "The Problem of Consciousness" is a direct address to Marxist readers and represents a particularly Picconean evaluation of the historicity of Marxist understandings of consciousness. In doing so, Piccone articulates the basis for a significant portion of "Phenomenological Marxism," i.e., the problematic elements in the contemporary understanding of class consciousness and the necessity of synthesizing a qualitative alternative to orthodoxy.

The basic Marxist notion of education—not in the conventional sense, but in the dialectical—posits an autodidactic capacity attained as a result of subjectification induced by the alienating process of modern labor, whereby the laborer retains enough subjectivity to embody their personal vitality in the object they produce, but are otherwise abstracted as mere elements of capital thus reduced to objects. Meanwhile, the product of their labors becomes the subjective agent of the bourgeois, and it is at this moment that (discussed at length in "Phenomenological Marxism") the subject-object-identical can occur, creating the autodidactic moment in which true consciousness has the opportunity to coalesce. [80] In Piccone's view, the Second and Third Communist International failed to take into account this "essential theoretical parameter" in their evaluation of the inevitability of the bourgeoisie/proletarian conflict, a result of the inability of capitalism to accede to even the most basic demands of trade unionism. Laying the foundation

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[80] Paul Piccone, "The Problem of Consciousness." *Telos* 178-187, no.5 (Spring 1970): 179, *Telos* online archive, http://journal.telospress.com/content/1970/5.toc (accessed October 2016).

for his argument in "Phenomenological Marxism", Piccone describes the historical process whereby this autodidactic moment was waylaid by the expansion of capitalism via imperialistic processes. It was the failure to apprehend the capacity of this release-valve to relieve the tensions inherent in capitalism that led to the ideological failures of the internationals and represented a fundamental misapprehension of the nature of capital accumulation by theoreticians of the era.[81]

Theoreticians, such as Rosa Luxemburg in her *Accumulation of Capital*, failed to account for the capacity of capitalism to sustain a system of "broad reproduction" by predatory coexistence with noncapitalist spheres subject to exploitation by the capitalist world, which allowed the reinvestment of capital into the labor force, thereby allowing "the process of objectification [to be] indefinitely postponed, thus preventing the development of subject-object identity which alone is able to attain class consciousness."[82] Therefore, states characterized by advanced capitalist economies were increasingly insulated from the possibility of revolution, and the Internationals assumed that the model of broad reproduction was irrelevant insofar as it could not be reconciled with capitalism (as it entails limited redistribution), instead contenting themselves with Leninism and its assertions that class-consciousness can be externally imposed or the more traditional Marxist notion that one must simply sit on one's laurels and allow the inevitable confrontation between the dyadic classes to occur, with the inevitable victory of the proletariat, and so on.[83] However, as historical events clearly demonstrate, capitalism was capable of sustaining the model of broad reproduction within the context of imperialism and, despite Lenin's recognition of the centrality of external exploitation to the suppression of domestic class-consciousness, he "failed to integrate his insights into a totalizing account…as

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[81] Ibid., 182.
[82] Ibid., 184.
[83] Ibid., 184-185.

such, for the reified western proletariat Marxism could only be introduced as an *ideology* wholly dissociated from their concrete life-situation."[84] It was when Marxism took on the characteristics of pure ideology that the fate of the so-called "inevitable" western revolutions was sealed. In Piccone's view, Lenin's fundamental failure was an inability to adapt analytical paradigms to the new context created by imperialism, despite the centrality of imperial expansion to Lenin's work and to the Internationals in general.

The same mistake was made by Lukács, and others, who found themselves "dealing with mere categories which…were not categories of their concrete socio-historical otherness...but categories of a reality that was not approached in its natural givenness, but as *another cluster of abstract categories*,"[85] thus reducing them to ideological abstractions and suffering the same fate as Leninist doctrines. This process, occurring in the late 1920s at the full bloom of imperial expansion, is where Piccone locates the core of the crisis in Marxism which he attempts to resolve in "Phenomenological Marxism"—the necessity of understanding Marxism within a socio-historical context, to subject Marxism to dialectical analysis rooted in concrete phenomenology (though he does not yet employ that term.) "Today," wrote Piccone, "we have no meaningful theory of class-consciousness applicable to advanced industrial society,"[86] and it is precisely the construction of this theory that Piccone attempts in "Phenomenological Marxism."

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[84] Ibid., 186.

[85] Ibid., 187.

[86] Paul Piccone, "Phenomenological Marxism." *Telos* 1-31, no. 9 (Fall 1971): 187, *Telos* online archive, http://journal.telospress.com/content/1971/9.toc (accessed October 2016).

Fall 1971: Phenomenological Marxism

One of Piccone's most critical essays from the early period of Telos, "Phenomenological Marxism," outlines Piccone's perception that fundamental revisions must be made to contemporary Marxist doctrine in order that it should, to a fundamental degree, reflect the lived reality of its principle concerns (that is, the status of the proletariat and the "revolution" broadly) rather than strict adherence to the "empty shell held together by dogmatic slogans" propagated by Soviet-influenced "orthodox" Marxist outlets.[87] The popularity, or at least synthetically imposed hegemony, of this particular brand of contentless Marxism (reduced to a series of political apologetics to explain the actions of the Soviet state) therefore forces any attempt to revise Orthodox Marxism in "contraposition to the Orthodoxy" in order to "expose the bankruptcy of orthodoxy for the nth time, but also explain it in terms of critical Marxism"[88] that is capable of genuinely influencing social realities. Thus, a phenomenological treatment would fundamentally diverge from existing Marxism, and constitute itself as a revolutionary (rather than reformist) alternative to the existing status quo—and, in Piccone's eyes, represents the only avenue by which Marxism can be saved "from the ideological grave into which it has been forced."[89]

The severity of Piccone's antipathy for the Soviet doctrine is at the forefront in this piece, particularly the degree to which it imposes itself upon the lives of regular Soviet citizens—possibly a result of *Telos'* engagements with dissident left wing writers, but also characteristic of Piccone's tendency to reject state-imposed ideology even at this early stage—and he represents it

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[87] Piccone, "Phenomenological Marxism," 2.
[88] Ibid., 3.
[89] Ibid.

as (under Brezhnev) "computerized Stalinism,"[90] the result of an axiomatically flawed premise at the base of Soviet government-social structures. These structures are nondialectic and therefore incapable of producing revolutionary progress, insofar as they are fundamentally wedded to the notion that the subject—the Soviet bureaucracy, implied to be a class unto itself (a hint at the way Piccone would later perceive bureaucratic apparatuses in general), was a separate subject from the object, soviet society itself. This "mechanistic doctrine" was founded on the notion that the object would, according to the manipulations of the subject, change and improve, while the subject, or Soviet bureaucratic class, would remain "essentially unchanged in its teleology and perseverance," thus precluding the possibility of self-conscious, totalizing, revolutionary change.[91]

Critical to his understanding of this radical separation inherent in the Soviet system is the degree to which it creates and perpetuates what Piccone refers to as a "theological Marxism."[92] Soviet Marxism is reduced to a pseudo-theological intellectual state by precisely the separation between subject/object with which he has concerned—the Soviet Communist Party created a discourse in which "everyone but the leader ends up as a mere executor of the sacred mandates," and the execution of these mandates is defended fiercely by the Orthodox Marxists for whom the implementation of Marxism means simply acquiescence to Soviet bureaucratic commands. Thus, "all the philosophy and culture," the Marxist language and reasoning, is deprived of its revolutionary spirit and deployed merely as a sophisticated tool of apologetics and are, therefore,

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[90] Ibid., 5.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., 6.

acts of "faith and mystification…in which the working-class spectators are forced to constantly applaud the ludicrous 19th century re-runs dished out by *Pravda* as the road to the future."[93]

For Piccone, the hegemony of this nondialectical and philosophically bankrupt Marxism serves to conceal the problematic nature of twentieth-century Marxism—particularly Soviet Marxism, as sino-Communist analyses do not appear in this accounting—thus preventing scholars from integrating a contemporary understanding of the working class into a revolutionary Marxist phenomenology. For Piccone, it is clear even at this stage of his intellectual development that he no longer perceives the global proletariat as the immediate instrument of revolution, a truth so inherently contradictory to Marxist Orthodoxy that its merest suggestion precipitates dismissal and accusations of bourgeois influence. Therefore, for Piccone, his Phenomenological Marxism would be a reckoning with this heretofore unacknowledged truth, opening the way for broader philosophical self-consciousness within the Marxist discourse and thus rendering the inert Soviet Orthodoxy dynamic and dialectical.[94]

Piccone does not, however, claim to be the first or principal evangelist for the concept of phenomenological Marxism, but instead roots his claims in evaluations of what he refers to as the "south-west German school," via the influence of Heidegger, writers like Lukács have created a Marxism distinct from Soviet theory, referred to by Piccone (and another principle contributor to *Telos* during this time period, Marcieu Merleu-Ponty[95]) referred to as "Western Marxism," which has grown and elaborated upon itself since its initial emergence during the first

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[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Such as "Western Marxism," published in 1970, which evaluates the relationships between positivism, relativism, and the Marxist capacity to impact Western philosophy and material conditions. It emphasizes the particularities of western ontology to demonstrate the unique position occupied by neo-Marxist thought amongst NATO aligned nations.

World War.[96] This tradition was founded primarily, in Piccone's view, as a contraposition to the mechanized Marxism (to which he has referred earlier in the essay and in other works in various terms, perhaps the most succinct being the "computerized Stalinism" from earlier in this essay) of the second international, which, politically irrelevant and stagnantly reformist, was in desperate need of a revitalized approach which would serve to remove international socialism from its 19th century parochialism. This, Piccone asserts, grew from interpretations emanating from Lukács' attempts to "dialectically articulate a dynamic Marxism free of the metaphysical shackles of scientism and positivism," approaching social analysis in a totalizing, Hegelian fashion.[97] While the result of this attempt—Lukács' *History and Class-Consciousness*—was unfortunately idealistic and non-phenomenological (Piccone describes it as a "beautiful dream altogether lacking any mediation,")[98] it laid the groundwork for later German scholars to mediate between lived reality and the abstract dialectics of Lukács' work. In Piccone's view, it was Herbert Marcuse who attempted to reconcile the abstractions of Marxist meaning broadly with socio-historical context, the latter of which can only be understood via dialectical historical materialism, leaving the abstractions atemporal and unmoored, much like the Orthodoxy Piccone despises so vehemently.

While Marcuse never successfully reconciled what Piccone recognizes as irreconcilable—"either phenomenology dissolves in the dialectic, in which case it ceases to be phenomenology, or the dialectic is frozen in the phenomenological foundation and loses its dynamism, thus ceasing to be dialectical"[99]—he laid the foundation for approaches that would

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[96] Ibid., 8.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., 9.
[99] Ibid., 11.

not attempt to forcibly synthesize the incompatibilities of dialectical materialism and phenomenology but utilize them separately, and, thus, productively.

Indeed, for Piccone, Marxism and Phenomenology are both mechanically irreconcilable and socio-historically inseparable, and only at a precise intersection of the two it becomes "possible to attain any reconciliation which produces a relevant phenomenology and a nondogmatic Marxism"[100]—this intersection occurs when one perceives Marxism, as an abstract set of ideas utilized to understand social structure, as emanating from the phenomenological or socio-historical characteristics of the structure in question; thus, though mechanically separate, both are fundamentally intertwined. Piccone elucidates upon this by explaining that phenomenology is, at its core "the tracing back of all mediations to human operations that constituted them"[101] while simultaneously historicizing them, thus allowing phenomenological Marxism (or socio-historical Marxism) to engage dialectically with existing Marxist orthodox materialism and alter it to such a degree that the ossified consciousness of labor can reemerge from its particular material sedimentations and attain a level of what Piccone refers to as "true consciousness," i.e., a socio-historical consciousness that "expresses the objective interests of the subjects possessing it."[102]

"Something," writes Piccone, "must have been wanting **in** Marxism from the very beginning."[103] An attempt to discern this absence, which Piccone identifies as a task critical for the contemporary 20th century Marxist (beyond the practical necessity of dealing with the "degeneration" of the Soviet Union), would allow a phenomenological elaboration outward and thus present an opportunity to understand Stalinism and the various catastrophes wrought by

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[100] Ibid., 12.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid., 13.
[103] Ibid., 15.

Soviet Marxism. Therefore, phenomenological Marxism, which "reduces all theoretical constructs" to a socio-historical and material, or "living," context paves the way for a true understanding both of the object subjected to analysis as well as the fundamental goals of that object (in this case, Marxism) as reflected by their impact on the life-world of everyday persons.[104] Essentially, Piccone presents phenomenology as a means by which Marxism can attain a true theory of consciousness, the fundamental precursor to dialectical advancement—which itself positions, as he articulated earlier, phenomenology as both the starting point and a necessary analytical tool in the construction of a revolutionary Marxism unbound by the moribund ruthlessness of Soviet ideology.

The distinction between the bourgeois philosophies and what Piccone would regard as real, or vital, or dynamic, or unorthodox Marxism is the degree to which it is divorced from the contemplative and plodding nature of bourgeois philosophical thought. Bourgeois philosophy is characterized as contemplative precisely because the degree of its inertness correlates exactly with the degree to which bourgeois observers do not produce, but merely consume, the products of other classes, and is thus regarded as "objective" (by the bourgeois, detached as they are from the living-world of production and dynamism), in which both subject and object can be understood, defined, and categorized before confronting one another, "taking on the form of mechanical materialism, idealism, or irrationalism at different times in its futile effort to reconcile…subject and object."[105] Which, as Piccone has noted, is an impossible task, for the subject and object dialectically reconstitute one another according to particular sociohistorical conditions and contexts. Only totalizing—and therefore phenomenological—analyses can account for the relationship between the concept (such as Marxism) and the object (such as

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[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid., 16.

society) by understanding them as not symmetrical in constitution but contingent upon socio-historical factors.

Therefore, contends Piccone, knowledge and concept production can be understood in the same fashion as commodity production and are subject to the same contextual influences and cannot be detached or abstracted outside of the manner in which capitalist society alienates the worker (or detaches him) from the object he produces, thus reducing him to a subject, and abstracts the object he produces, elevating it to the status of capital.[106] Thus, the original goal—in commodity production, the satisfaction of human (or at least bourgeois) needs—is obfuscated, and collapses inward as object becomes subject, and the concept of rationality produced by this mechanism becomes the totalizing force by which knowledge and commodity production are fueled. Thus the crisis of capitalism is produced as "rationality becomes its own criterion" and "atomic destruction and Nazi barbarism face no significant opposition: far from being a departure from bourgeois rationality, they are its logical outcome."[107] The individual, the subject now reduced to an object via the processes of production, contends with an ostensibly independent and predetermined rationality into which they fit "only as a mere object determined also by that very same Frankensteinian rationality."[108] This model, in which the dialectic collapses under the weight of a self-perpetuating and totalizing concept of rationality, can equally be applied to knowledge production.

Elaborating upon his earlier work regarding the crisis of science and rationality as a result of the enlightenment's socio-historical framework, Piccone asserts that contemporary scientists operate in precisely the same discursive context as a laborer, reduced to an object and unable to

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[106] Ibid., 17.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid., 18.

perceive that which does not function within the so-called rational framework in which he or she has been forced to operate. Thus, unlike the universal scientists possessed by a broad guiding *telos* he describes in "Towards a Socio-Historical Understanding," the contemporary knowledge-maker represents a series of rational processes taking place in a fundamentally irrational context, irrational in that it has become myopic rather than universal and lacks the *telos* of broad inquiry that renders it meaningful. Since this scientific construct cannot attain a level of self-consciousness necessary to reacquire universality, it understands the particular—or the restricted areas of expertise, fragmenting and growing increasingly as technology changes—as the only method by which the universal can be accessed.[109] Thus, for Piccone, when the bourgeoisie "revealed itself as a particular class with material interests radically different from the nascent *universal class*, the *universality* of its science became an ideological tool of social manipulation."[110] Therefore, in much the same way bourgeois science in the Renaissance represented an alternative science to feudal mysticism, a non-bourgeois science can only be produced by the emergence of a class that bears the same relationship as the early bourgeois did to the feudal system, only to the contemporary bourgeoisie. Only then can an alternative, totalizing science characterized by authentic *telos* be produced.

This particular system of production, asserts Piccone, is the very same by which Marxism has come into its current crisis—originally articulated as not a metaphysical perspective but rather a particular consciousness emerging at a particular socio-historical point with the goal of accomplishing a specific sociological/economic change—a universal goal, the constitution of a new class—it has collapsed into the subject-into-object process that has consumed both commodity and knowledge production. This process, however, also inherently produces, by dint

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[109] Ibid., 19.
[110] Ibid.

of the alienation of the workers, a context in which the objectified laborer becomes "subject-object identical"[111] and is therefore capable of realizing the nature of his own objective interests. The subject reduced to object—the worker, the scientist, Orthodox Marxism—is presented with the opportunity to attain historical consciousness through the process of alienation in which the objects produced by a laborer are embodiments of his subjectivity, or individual capacity to produce value (essentially, being alive). Therefore the worker must retain some degree of subjectivity—because a dead man cannot produce value—and his alienation, which results in acceptance of ruling class parameters of rationality into which they fit themselves, "sets the stage for the overcoming of alienation…as a commodity on the labor market, the worker finds himself as the product of bourgeois society, and as such, is reunited with his objectified subjectivity"[112] that had previously been stolen from him via the productive, alienating process.

This is critical for Piccone, insofar as the moment of supreme alienation—rather than demonstrating an unequivocal acceptance and perpetuation of bourgeois ideology—actually constitutes the precise moment in which the worker is capable of demanding alterations to the status quo. Though these demands are typically reformist in nature and limited to the sphere of unionization and a desire for increased bargaining power and immediate improvements in the standard of living for the worker, it nevertheless represents a critical juncture in the eventual formation of a genuinely revolutionary self-consciousness; when the capitalist system cannot, or will not, meet fundamental demands, workers organizations alter their goals from specific reformism to revolutionary totality. Thus, in Piccone's view, this inevitability regarding the accumulation of consciousness as articulated in Marx's original works is also the site of the "something wanting" in original Marxism—where Marx anticipated the rise of a party as one

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[111] Ibid., 20.
[112] Ibid.

contingent upon the preexisting revolutionary consciousness of the workers, and therefore not in need of elaboration, theoreticians (particularly Lenin) began to insist upon the external imposition of consciousness on the working class. This, for Piccone, was the source of the contemporary crisis in Marxism—"a premature totalization of the capitalist mode of production"[113] and, therefore, of any attempt to produce an authentic consciousness capable of revolutionizing that mode of production.

The fundamental conceit at the heart of this supposedly inevitable revolutionary development, however, lies in the axiomatic assumption that the bourgeois-capitalist society would be unwilling and/or unable to satisfy even the most meager demands of the trade unions, and did not properly take into account the possibilities of systematically precluding the development of revolutionary consciousness via simultaneous acquiescence to the immediate demands of labor (basic reforms) and the outward expansion of the capitalist world, allowing the "full burden of exploitation" to be transferred to the nascent working classes of developing nations, thus privileging the proletariat in developed, acquisitive colonial nations.[114] In Piccone's view, what Marx failed to account for in the first volume of *Capital* was the possibility that the tremendous non-white populations of the world might also be taken into the rapidly expanding envelope of capitalist production, further exacerbating the divide between the so-called proletariat of the privileged colonial nations and those they colonized. Thus, this late-19th century revitalization of capitalism via imperialism deprived the workers of authentic, universal self-consciousness that Marxism *ought* to be, instead becoming "at best, a *separate* ideology for manipulating workers and mediating the thawed class struggle."[115] Thus, Marxism in the early

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[113] Ibid., 21.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid., 22.

20th century was deprived of its universality and—like commodity and knowledge production—became perceived as an "ideology of the proletariat as a particular social class with particular interests"[116] Therefore this degenerate Marxism, which took on many inadequate forms until Stalinism rendered it a "fixed metaphysics,"[117] a political theology premised on the atemporal, contextless validity of Marxist precepts separate from its original structure, which, having been premised on the interests of the 19th century universal proletariat (the west), now privileged their particular interests above those of the universal proletariat and became a tool for bureaucratic oppression and selective reformism.[118]

In much the same way that Marxism broadly, at the point of imperialist expansion, began to represent the particular interests of the western proletariat, so too did Soviet communism—when it became apparent that the safety valve constituted by imperial expansion had checked the possibility for revolution in Western Europe, the doctrine of socialism in one country created a context in which Marxism, broadly utilized as an ideological tool to justify the ruthlessness of Stalinism in service of the creation of a classless society, became synonymous with the geopolitical interests of the Soviet Union.[119] Put simply, through the same process that befell the workers of the developed west, the Soviet Union reduced itself to an abstract object, vitiated by precisely enough subjectivity to sustain the oppressive structure of the Soviet ruling class.

It is at this moment, the point in time in which Marxism had become most thoroughly petrified and associated with the particular interests of particular, divergent groups, Piccone asserts that phenomenological Marxism becomes relevant and singular in terms of opening the

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[116] Ibid., 22.
[117] Ibid., 23.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid., 24.

possibility of a consciousness that includes qualitative, revolutionary change. It is here that Piccone's regard for Husserl and his *Lebenswelt* becomes particularly clear, as he perceives Husserl's critiques of science as paradigmatically transposable onto critiques of Marxism— where "Husserlian critique of science centers on the failure of this science to actually change reality by occluding it with categories and thus checkmating man as the historical agent to the level of a mere passive object operating among similar objects," a Husserlian analysis of Marxism would begin by phenomenologically interpreting "the base as the *Lebenswelt* and the worker as *transcendental subjectivity* precisely to the extent that both notions have become reified within 'orthodox' Marxism and occlude rather than explain social dynamics."[120] Husserlian phenomenological analysis would allow one to transcend the cycle by which precategorical conceptualized reality sustains itself by creating a reality that is perceived via the apprehension of one's life through pre-existing concepts, rather than as an authentic or total experience. In other words, rather than being permanently trapped within a cycle of apprehension via preexisting (bourgeois) concepts, Husserlian analysis offers the opportunity to perform new labor in perceiving and apprehending reality via analysis of the *Lebenswelt*, which "does include the empirical and common sense world, but encompasses much much more."[121] Husserlian Marxism searches for the roots of the precategorical understandings through which the world is apprehended, repressed by the mundanity of alienated life and its day-to-day manifestations, so that a new phenomenology, unrestrained by existing bourgeois teleology, can be constituted. [122] It is thus similar in approach to structural, sociological Marxism but divergent insofar as it is

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[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid., 25.
[122] Ibid.

universal rather than particular, qualitative rather than quantitative, and can concern itself with
what *ought* to be rather than what *could* be within the constraints of the existing system.

Ultimately, what Piccone and his forebears are positing is an alternative to orthodox
Marxism that is fundamentally humanistic and principally concerned with the alteration of the
Lebenswelt, unwilling to concede the non-economic spheres of human activity as irrelevant to
the construction of a classless society. Indeed, Piccone stresses, at the crescendo of
"Phenomenological Marxism", that mere material alterations or rearrangements of the hierarchy
of production are insufficient, should they fail to qualitatively improve the mundane lived-
experience of both capitalist and worker. Socialism, when perceived theologically and
understood as an unchanging abstraction, is understood as having been established when
collective control over the means of production has been established by the working class,
typically measured via the mechanisms of bourgeois rationality (i.e., typical economic indicators,
GNP, per-capita wealth, standard of living, etc). For the phenomenological Marxist, however, the
acquisition of collective control is meaningless (and potentially counterproductive) if not
accompanied by a totalizing change in the lived experience of the universal man, one in which
"fragmented and robotized workers would become subjects consciously (politically) engaged in
determining their destiny concretely"[123] rather than as a mediated subject controlled by a
nominally representative bureaucracy. The dissolution of the old proletariat is such that, writes
Piccone, advanced (what we might now call late-stage) capitalism has created a context in which
"no king's horses or king's men (or even a Leninist party) will ever succeed in putting Humpty
Dumpty back together again."[124] This is because the vanguards, petrified by the hegemony of
Soviet Marxism, cannot perceive class phenomenologically, in terms of not just the relationship

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[123] Ibid., 27.
[124] Ibid., 29.

of a class to the means of production, but also accounting for *Lebenswelt* cultivated by that relationship—in other words, the bourgeois/proletarian dichotomy must be complicated by the emergence of groups with intersecting liberatory interests, discussed below, which do not adhere exclusively to the antiquated dyadic class model.[125]

In a presentiment of his later work, Piccone ends "Phenomenological Marxism" by discussing the capacity for bourgeois society to internalize the interests of groups concerned with what is neologistically referred to as social justice. Though this would coalesce broadly into a thesis of artificial negativity, one of Piccone's most vital contributions to revolutionary philosophy, at this stage he simply perceives the possibility that, contrary to their stated intentions, Black and Women's Liberation movements and their demands—the disintegration of racism and total equality—can be integrated into the bourgeois system when their *particular* needs are met, thus depriving them of the universality and *telos* that is central to Piccone's revolutionary model.[126] He is, however, more hopeful about the possible integration of these groups into a revolutionary consciousness than in later writings—indeed, Piccone perceives the agitants for meaningful social justice in the late 1960s and early 1970s a tremendous, untapped sphere of vital energy that constitute a "fusion"[127] of both universal and particular demands, and it is thus possible that, if appropriately influenced by a genuinely revolutionary ethos, could avoid "the shipwreck of revolutionary potentialities into integrated standardization"[128] (and thus bourgeois capitalism) and instead be integrated into a class analysis that takes into account the sophistication of their particular interests in relation to the universal sickness of advanced capitalism.

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[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid., 30.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid., 31.

"Phenomenological Marxism" is, perhaps, the most important work Piccone produced during this time period, insofar as it unambiguously demonstrates the degree to which his intellectual interests concern themselves with totalizing critiques of existing social, material, and intellectual structures as well as the fundamental humanism at the heart of his then-nascent philosophy of artificial negativity and phenomenological Marxism. Rather than being bound by an abstract adherence to mechanistic Marxism, as is so typical amongst revolutionary socialists, Piccone is principally interested in man's capacity to improve his own life in a meaningful fashion, to transcend the mundanity and alienation of capitalist life that, in the context of advanced capitalism, cuts across now-outdated class and geopolitical models. Whether this improvement is strictly socialist, Marxist, anarchist, leftist, communalist, or any number of other particular labels laden with discursive meanings is relatively unimportant to the phenomenological Marxist, for whom precategorization and axiomatic reasoning occlude the possibility of even the perception of revolutionary change and are therefore inherently problematic. What he insists upon throughout this period is the primacy of the universal experience, taking into account the role of the unprivileged non-western proletariat without falling prey to the platitudes or simplifications of third-worldism or Leninist vanguardism, instead insisting upon the perpetual maintenance of a truly self-conscious, democratic system.

While the preconditions for the establishment of universal revolutionary consciousness certainly include traditional Marxist goals—the acquisition of democratic control over the means of production, quantitative improvement in the lives of workers, an end to the exploitation of foreign markets as a safety mechanism for the perpetuation of domestic exploitation—these goals, when attained, are not terminal, do not inherently establish the classless society left unarticulated by Marx. For Piccone, unlike most Marxists, they are not valuable in-and-of

themselves, insofar as economic rearrangements do not necessarily imply qualitative changes in the *Lebenswelt* of the common man. Instead, the establishment of orthodox "socialism" creates the preconditions for both the acquisition of revolutionary universal consciousness or the opportunity for stagnation and oppression in a context that is merely quantitatively different, such as in the USSR. The revolutionary *telos*, the universal self-consciousness of not just the western proletariat, but of humanity broadly, can only emerge if the establishment of socialism transcends the quantitative discursive boundaries of bourgeois rationality and, rather than reification and thus alienation in a revised context, presents an opportunity for profound, qualitative change to the *Lebenswelt* of every human agent within the context of global capitalism.

Chapter 2: *Telos* in the 1970's, 80's, and Artificial Negativity

In the late 1970's and early 1980s, *Telos* began to chart a distinctly different course than it had throughout its first years in publication, in which its revisionist Marxist aspirations stood at forefront of its editorial mission. The intervening years—particularly the crises of the 1970s and the apparently unanimous victory of the Washington Consensus, combined with the perennial hatred by *Telos* contributors of the authoritarian bureaucracy of what might be deemed "actually existing socialism" in the Soviet Union and China (in the midst of liberalization)—had exerted significant pressure on the *Telos* circle and, in particular, Paul Piccone. Though Piccone fundamentally retained a desire to identify the possibilities for qualitative change in the world detached from tautological rationalities and systematized dogmatism, his disenchantment with Marxism (which he had previously treated as a patient in dire need of treatment) had grown to the point where it feels inaccurate to characterize the Piccone of this era as a Marxist. Indeed, *Telos*, radical as ever, began to transcend the left-right binaries in ways more transgressive than its previous criticisms of the specific characteristics of Marxist thought, embracing the concept of "artificial negativity" and criticism of the totalizing aspects of liberalism, choosing to confront those via whatever intellectual avenues were available rather than those traditionally associated with the statist left.

What distinguishes this era from the early *Telos* editions, however, is not just the seismic nature of the intellectual shift, but rather the effect of Piccone's editorial leadership on the trajectory of the journal. Where previously Piccone had written, at great length, substantial philosophical essays published in *Telos*, he largely confined himself (though not entirely) to directing the intellectual tone and content of the publication, writing essays that were considerably shorter—but not less laconic—and penning the introduction to each edition of *Telos*.

Thus, in order to understand *Telos* and Piccone between 1973 and 1978, it is essential to understand the writers whom he chose to include in the journal, writers who it is difficult to imagine finding their way into the pages of *Telos* during its more stridently Marxist early years. It is also in this period that the current cohort of *Telos* contributors, many of whom are easily mischaracterized as "right wing" or otherwise non-Marxist, began to make their first contributions to the publication.[129]

Therefore, in this era, it is no longer consistent to label *Telos* merely a "left wing" journal, as it had grown into a uniquely critical institutional purveyor of radical anti-liberal thought, a tendency that would grow throughout the years (particularly those outside the scope of this project). The opposition to the all-consuming nature of Western liberalism, and the perception of the inevitability of the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the liberalization of the Chinese state (with which *Telos*, largely concerned with the ideological and political characteristics of the United States and USSR, had more or less ignored anyway) became a paramount concern. The prescience of Piccone and the writers of this era is truly astounding, insofar as they predicted the fall of the Soviet Union and the certainty of market-driven, government-sustained Liberal economic hegemony on a worldwide scale, and set out to expose the inherently dangerous faults and contradictions of Liberalism and its supposed rationality. In doing so, *Telos* would eventually engage ideas typically anathema to Marxist thought—and broader left-wing truisms— in an effort to identify a path to qualitative social change that could escape the tremendous

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[129] In *A Journal of No Illusions*, "Telos At Kansas," David Dickens wrote about the later years of Telos: "Like just about anyone else who had been affiliated with in any way with *Telos* from its inception up to the early 80s…were both perplexed and deeply disappointed by the journal's shift to the right." This, however, is something of a mischaracterization that conflates an opposition to liberalism with conservativism and dichotomies Piccone attempted to transcend. Ben Agger and Tim Luke, "A Journal of No Illusions: Telos, Paul Piccone and the Americanization of Critical Theory," 68.

capacity of the Liberal state to internalize all organized opposition. Thus, *Telos* found itself in a truly unique position—an illiberal intellectual center organized around an opposition to the defining world-system and, having grown from a fundamentally "left-wing" perspective, retaining the essential characteristics of humanist socialism while simultaneously rejecting any and all systematic manifestations of left (or right) wing political ideology perceived as compromised by the artificial negativity of the state. In order to understand this process, one must first understand what is meant by artificial negativity, and the importance of this concept in locating *Telos'* intellectual position during this time period.

Therefore, the format for this chapter will be slightly adjusted from the first—while still organized chronologically and emphasizing analysis of the writings of Paul Piccone, it is necessary to insert some pieces from other *Telos* contributors insofar as they are an important reflection of Piccone's own views—expressed via editorial decisions more predominantly than in the preceding chapter—and because much of Piccone's writing in this era lacks the explanatory depth seen in pieces like the following. In order to understand the basic elements of what Piccone *did* write for *Telos* in this period, it is essential to examine and acquire important definitions from other contributors, as well as to analyze the nature of their contributions in comparison to Piccone's own writings in early *Telos*.

1977: The Changing Function of Critical Theory

Writing in 1977 for the *Journal of German Studies*, Piccone advanced and articulated a similar hypothesis to "Tim Luke's Culture and Politics in the Age of Artificial Negativity"— essentially, that the process of bureaucratic rationalization (and homogenization) by which the technocratic mid-20th century had been characterized had exerted a tremendous effect on society and intellectual analysis, one that excluded and dissolved the existing methods and

understandings articulated by the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School. While Piccone had roundly criticized Orthodox Marxism in Telos' earliest days, he had remained (though he would likely deny it) fundamentally revisionist, rooting his vision for a neo-Marxist emancipatory enterprise in the possibility of reevaluating the contemporary manifestations of eternal, if contingent, Marxist historical structures. In the 1970s, however, Piccone—and those who wrote for *Telos*—despaired at the triumph of the one-dimensional society via homogenizing state-bureaucratic processes, but also perceived the possibility for the reconstitution of externalities with the capacity to effect meaningful change. In "The Changing Function of Critical Theory," Piccone alludes to the critical moment of subject-object identification he outlined in his most important essay, "Phenomenological Marxism," and constitutes a framework which is subsequently expanded upon by Tim Luke, and Piccone himself.

For Piccone, in effect, traditional critical theorists had been unable to effectively address the subversion and intstrumentalization characteristic of the totalizing society, and were thus compelled to "escape into abstruseness and isolation to avoid homogenization,"[130] a process amplified by what Piccone refers to as the "cretinization" of an increasingly irrelevant academic community, turning inwards and attempting to recycle Marxist theory when it had become unambiguously irrelevant—so much, indeed, that by the 1970s, in Piccone's view, "Critical Theory itself constituted a prolonged obituary."[131] Rather than confronting the problematic nature of the irrelevancy of theory so deeply unmoored from praxis and, indeed, from phenomenological reality, the utter lack of concretely implementable political ideas emanating from critical theorists during the era of one-dimensionality morphed its "political impotence into

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[130] Paul Piccone, "The Changing Function of Critical Theory," *New German Critique*, no.12 (1977): 29-37, JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/487754?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents (accessed October 2017).
[131] Piccone, "The Changing Function of Critical Theory," 30.

theoretical virtue" that could justify its continued existence only in terms of future vaguely defined future possibilities,[132] thereby rendering it publically irrelevant. This irrelevancy, however, did not stem exclusively from the psychoanalytic bent or tendency towards micro-analytical social criticism, but principally from an unwillingness to finally jettison the remnants of orthodox Marxist theory and its inherent belief in capitalist historical stages as a fundamental prelude to a "socialist pot of gold at the end of a capitalist rainbow."[133] This, in tandem with the focus of critical theorists on the vague possibility of a future rearrangement of society premised on fundamentally Marxist assumptions, rendered critical theory stagnant and unable to confront the absence of external negativity in late-capitalist, one-dimensional American society, particularly as transnational consciousness became the exclusive domain of corporate entities (a process further outlined by Luke).

In "Culture and Politics in the Age of Artificial Negativity," written a year later, Luke expands upon the characteristics and nature of the "transitional phase" between the entrepreneurial capitalism of the pre-rationalized corporate-bureaucratic system of post-new deal America—a critical phase that obliterated the possibilities upon which critical theory's hope for the future rested, the emergence of the sort of organic counter-bureaucratic movements of the non-homogenized state. In Piccone's view, which is more thoroughly articulated later by Luke, "the historicity of the transitional phase was altogether ignored" by critical theorists and, when it finally manifested itself in the form of a totalized state-bureaucratic administrative society in the 1960s and 1970s, "it became impossible [for traditional critical theorists] to theoretically grasp the nature of the new developments."[134]

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[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid., 32.

Ironically, this failure to grasp the rearrangement of society precipitated by the process of technocratic rationalization "embalmed and reified" the objectivist positivism of rationalizing processes *within* the analyses of critical theorists who had previously sought to avoid precisely the internalization of such tendencies, owing primarily to the thoroughness with which the discourse of the bureaucratic state had penetrated all social spheres, with the possible exception of the most irrelevant and cloistered academic analyses.[135] In a perverse reflection of the eventual crises of over-rationalization that necessitated the production of artificial negativity by the bureaucratic system, the reification of objectivist Marxism by critical theorists, unable to recognize the totalizing nature of the rationalist system, imploded the relevancy of Marxist critical theory in much the same way the overrationalizing tendencies of the technocratic state revealed its own contradictions in the constitution of artificial negativity.

Essentially, for Piccone, critical theorists in the traditional sense had become irrelevant and unable to address the crisis of rationalization that the homogenizing processes of the mid-20th century had precipitated in much the same way the one-dimensional administered society faced the threat of implosion due to over-rationalization—however, unlike the state-administrative system, critical theorists did not have a framework parallel to the artificial negativity nurtured by the administrative state, and became effectively ossified. Where "the system is forced to reconstitute artificially the negativity it had hitherto sought to eliminate in order to provide automatic control mechanisms" to ensure its continued capacity to operate in accordance with the interests of the bureaucratic-corporate system, critical theorists was "imprisoned" in a framework that ruled out the possibility of internal contradictory (though carefully controlled) mechanisms that manifest themselves in the form of artificial negativity.

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[135] Ibid., 33.

Thus, critical theory was, in Piccone's view, rendered not only toothless in terms of its capacity to generate organic opposition to the totalizing system but, because of its paralysis, became "coextensive with the new logic of domination" and ended up "unwittingly supporting…those very forces it had opposed for almost half a century," the forces of homogenization and dissolution of social otherness.[136]

Indeed, Piccone was unsurprised by the cooptation of critical theory by the totalizing society, attendant as it was to what he calls the "final collapse of any hope for the Marxist model in the 1970s"[137] (critically demonstrating the degree to which Piccone had moved away from the neo-Marxism he evinced in the first chapter of this analysis). This collapse was comorbid and inseparable from the manifestation of artificial negativity, or the capacity—and necessity—of monopoly capital's (or the totalizing state, or the administrative-corporate rationalizing state) cultivation of quantitative emancipatory projects as part of the maintenance of its existence. This does not, however, mark the end of critical theory as a relevant avenue for the exploration of the eventual manifestation of productive externalities, but demonstrates the necessity of—in a thoroughly Picconean sense—the resituation of critical theory in the 1970s as a socio-historical thoughtform that acknowledges its contextualization within the transitional phase of homogenization and leaving orthodox Marxist analysis where it belongs—at the nadir of entrepreneurial capitalism and its imperialist characteristics while "searching for a yet-to-be-reconstituted critical perspective" capable of reckoning with the age of artificial negativity resulting from the prolonged process of state-administrative rationalization.[138]

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[136] Ibid., 34.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.

Like Luke would later note, and as Piccone had articulated in a less-thoroughly understood fashion during his Marxist era in the late 1960s—the process of homogenization in the United States must be understood as distinct insofar as it was institutionalized via the processes of Liberal democracy, such as New Deal administrative apparatuses and the artificial extension of civil rights (parameterized by the existing system). This is in contrast with the European process of mid-20th century rationalization which manifested itself in the form of authoritarian and genocidal projects designed to crush the organized Marxist opposition which did not exist in the United States. Thus, Piccone's comparisons between the Holocaust and the civil rights movements, as absurd as they may seem on their face, fundamentally rely on the premise of distinct but universal processes of technocratic administrative rationalization meant to homogenize the nation-state in order to eliminate externalities and otherness that threaten the totalizing nature of the system, be it Liberal (in the United States) or illiberal, as in the various fascist and authoritarian projects of western Europe and the Soviet Union. For Piccone, then, gulags, Auschwitz, and the voting rights act all represent concerted efforts by the administrative state apparatus to homogenize society in such a way that renders it manageable and prevents the moment of subject-object identification that Piccone earlier articulated in "Phenomenological Marxism" as the necessary precursor to qualitative socioeconomic change.

The transition period—referred to generally as the period of rationalization, homogenization, state-administrative consolidation, and so on—also had the effect of validating Piccone's theories regarding the situational necessity of orthodox Marxist thought (particularly that which emanated from Luxembourg and Lenin, which asserted that imperialism was the final stage of capitalism).[139] In the age of decolonization and the sudden absence of the state-

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[139] Ibid., 35.

sanctioned release valve of colonial expropriation for the benefit of the metropole and the maintenance of its administered society, an "institutional shift" took place in the era of one-dimensionality (that produces artificial negativity) manifested in not just the state-directed rationalization of labor, capital, and society in general but also the altered heading of capitalist development from the entrepreneurial expansionism articulated by Lenin and Luxembourg into what Piccone deems "intensive" rather than "extensive" growth.[140] For critical theory to retain its relevance, it must resituate itself in the (contemporary to the late 1970s) period of intensification of capital growth under the aegis of increasingly transnational corporate entities with decreasingly significant ties to the dominant, totalizing state of the mid-20th century. This would be attendant to a recognition that "the homogenization and depersonalization associated with this [transitional period]….constitute the historical limit of this transitory rationalizing phase" and that the hegemony of the one-dimensional state also corresponded to the genesis of the new possibilities for external opposition to one-dimensionality, even if they present themselves in forms (such as transnational corporations) that do not correspond to traditional left-wing notions of external subjects.

Essentially, in Piccone's view, the late 1970s represent—despite the gloominess associated with the domination of the administrative state and one-dimensionality—the reopening of emancipatory potential owing principally to the totality of the administrative state's victory. In the absence of "all potential and even imagined internal opposition," the bureaucratic-administrative state allows the reopening of institutional spaces in which "spontaneity and negativity can thrive and thus generate the kind of much needed internal control mechanisms"

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[140] Ibid.

required to check the deleterious effects of bureaucratic re-rationalization.[141] The fundamental issue with the generation of such spaces—besides their inherent artificiality, insofar as they are cultivated by the administrative state due to their necessity vis-à-vis the maintenance of the existing order—is that the triumph of the one-dimensional society had been so thoroughgoing as to wipe out the necessary intellectual contexts from which such spontaneous (and therefore authentic) negativity could emerge. For Piccone, then, in the age of artificial negativity, it is impossible to "automatically restore such historical formations as the long-since destroyed personality structure molded by organic community life" which had, in the era of entrepreneurial capitalism, produced the external negativity and perpetuated the non-identity or otherness of certain agglomerations of individuals. In effect, the reopening of public institutions, while representative of the *possibility* of the remanifestation of external negativity, failed to do so for want of the fundamental social context that renders the extemporaneous generation of opposition nearly impossible.

However, all is not hopeless for Piccone in the age of artificial negativity, because the void created by these institutional free spaces, which would once have been filled by a diffuse series of externalities in opposition to the administrative states, are instead characterized by "anomie and criminality," in which the dissolved individual "take their revenge destructively once the very means of their destruction must be relented to prevent an intensification of the system's internal imbalances."[142] In essence, a new, extemporaneous form of organic negativity wholly distinct from the intellectual constructs of entrepreneurial capitalism represent a possible relief-valve by which critical theory could reassert its relevance in the age of artificial negativity

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[141] Ibid., 36.

[142] Tim Luke,"Culture and Politics in the Age of Artificial Negativity," *Telos* 55-72, no. 35 (1978): 36, *Telos* online archive, http://journal.telospress.com/content/1978/35.toc (accessed October 2016).

by "paving the way for the kind of development and reception of critical theory that has hitherto been unimaginable."[143] It is in this context of possibility that Piccone sees a potential avenue for emancipatory reassertion of critical theory underlined by a reevaluation of the theory as historically contingent and—critically—capable of reaching an audience beyond academia and thus manifesting the sort of praxis required to effect any sort of qualitative change. Ultimately, Piccone writes, "an historically accurate reconstruction of critical theory's own trajectory from its inception onward, becomes a precondition for any future renewal"[144]—a renewal, that, should it be effected, reopens the avenues for external opposition to the totalizing system that had otherwise been obliterated by the transitional period of the mid-20th century.

Spring 1978: Culture and Politics in the Age of Artificial Negativity

The notion of "artificial" negativity is—in it's essence—one that asserts the United States (and in general, the liberalized, developed west) has uniquely situated itself in a position that is invulnerable to qualitative or revolutionarily significant oppositional social movements, by merit of the capacity of a Liberal bureaucracy to coopt and internalize such movements. This was achieved, in the words of Tim Luke, when the United States, as part of the flurry of state-rationalization that characterizes late "scientific" capitalism—completed the "transition to full monopoly capitalism".[145] This "rationalization," accomplished via state and corporate interventionism in the (formerly) diverse economic processes of the United States, had the effect of homogenizing the work force, of fundamentally reordering the existing (if spotty) logic of paternal capitalism to one that was universal and nihilistic, reliant upon the state to correct or attenuate its fundamental iniquities. This process negated the forces that had once been internal

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[143] Ibid., 37.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid., 55.

to Liberal society but external to the maintenance of its business interests, necessitating—according to proponents of the theory—the synthesis, or at least management, of movements that emerge from the context of monopoly capitalism but direct their energies against its systematic manifestation.[146] Internal challenges such as, say, the formation of a labor movement unmanaged by the state bureaucratic system could have the effect of opening a path to qualitative reordering, not in the interest in the eternally rationalizing administrative state—thus they must be integrated and subject to the same rationalizing parameters that govern the very phenomenon these movements ostensibly oppose.[147]

The process of Liberal internalization via the process of artificial negativity—as noted, essentially the coopting and eventually self-generation of dissidence without qualitative revolutionary elements—was the terminal form of what Luke (and other philosophers) had referred to as the *one-dimensional society*, or a society, which was rooted in the transition from diffuse entrepreneurial capitalism[148] to a more intensified, state-sanctioned and directed form of capitalism. This new form, the antecedent or developing version of the monopoly capitalism that creates the conditions in which artificial negativity becomes a necessary protective reaction to qualitative or excessively reformist threats, emerges from the colonial expansion of capitalism and, more broadly, the process of state intervention in service of rationalization and "scientific management"[149] of not just productive endeavors, but "all spheres of social interaction."[150] This process was intensified by the First World War in the United States specifically, but also in other advanced capitalist participants in the conflict, which necessitated the coordination of industry

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[146] Ibid., 56.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid., 57.
[150] Ibid.

with the maintenance of war-goals on a social level—a task which the United States set about in a fashion unique to developing monopoly capitalism and distinct from the more direct repressive methods associated with its entrepreneurial ancestor.

According to Luke, the process by which the US working class was "disciplined" was, rather than via direct physical action, achieved via "the development of advertising and mass marketing strategies" in which "workers disciplined and repressed themselves" into communities premised on the shared consumption of universally available consumer products.[151] This, however, encouraged the development of a homogeneous society in which confined social idiosyncrasies—or "cultural specificity, cultural otherness and political negativity"—which had been tolerated in the context of diffuse capitalism came under assault by the new homogeneity, ultimately disappearing and creating a society profoundly open to top-down instrumental rationalization by bureaucratic forces.[152] Thus, where once the state was able to exert only limited control over social tendencies, culturally distinct groups, and diffuse means of production and commerce, the process by which a mass culture was constituted (criticized at the time by philosophers from the Frankfurt School) was an essential first step towards the cementing of monopoly capitalism and the eventual conditions that would create—or necessitate—artificial negativity.

While the measures taken to control the economy in service of the war effort during the first world war were indeed an important step in this consolidation, Luke stresses the effects of the New Deal on the constitution of mass culture to a much more significant degree—the passage of regulatory acts in response to the stock-market crash and subsequent depression may have increased Union membership in a technical sense, but simultaneously subsumed Unions to

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[151] Ibid., 58.
[152] Ibid.

the rational-bureaucratic process driven by the state, rendering them a systematized part of administrative capitalism. This was effected by the "reconstitution of the individual and communal fragments in national unions, standardized collective bargaining, public works employment, and the federally managed national economy,"[153] essentially creating a profound and permanent interdependence between the working class and the now-interconnected state-corporate administrative bureaucracy. These tendencies continued through other rationalizing state sponsored projects, such as the (attempted) Fair Deal, Great Society, etc, creating a context in which universal rationalization —governed and manifested by "bureaucratic decisionism"— becomes the norm.[154] Once this has been accomplished, the system lacks an Outsider (or, in the language of Piccone's phenomenological Marxism, a subject capable of comprehending his own objectification), and thus becomes unable to rationalize itself in response to an outside threat, but instead begins the process of re-rationalization, subverting the purpose and nature of the initial rationalizing process owing to the absence of an external point of reference, an Outsider or subject.[155] These internal contradictions, borne from a lack of *external* contradictions to the rationalizing nature of the system (external insofar as they emanate from the same broad one-dimensional society or nation-state) fundamentally necessitate the transition from one-dimensionality to artificial negativity.

While Luke has principally focused on the domestic characteristics of the cementing of one-dimensionality and the subsequent transition to artificial negativity, he also positions these social changes within the international sphere and geopolitical context. Where once, in the context of entrepreneurial capitalism, "gunboat diplomacy" was replaced by subtler, more

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[153] Ibid., 59.
[154] Ibid., 60.
[155] Ibid.

discreet techniques supplemented by the power of transnational corporate consumption, which was self-incentivizing and typically did not require the sort of coercive action manifested in direct military intervention.[156] The international corporate entity serves to effectively extend US homogeneity—manifested in patterns of social organization and consumption and therefore premised largely on the availability of goods provided by corporations, not governments—as well as political and economic control via "unequal exchange of transnational commerce,"[157] or a permutation of extractive imperialism that no longer requires the physically coercive elements of military or covert manipulation.

Indeed, this "new imperialism," manifested almost entirely outside of the traditional political-interventionist spheres of superpower politics premised on the cold war dichotomy allowed, in Luke's view, the west to extend its hegemony over even Marxist-Leninist states in Asia and Africa—"given Cuba and Eastern Europe's own technological dependence on Western Transnational enterprise," writes Luke, the development of nominally Marxist states (in this example Ethiopia) "can only proceed rationally under the new imperialism…." [158] Essentially, the maintenance of overseas interests is no longer a militarized process, but instead one characterized by the almost universal penetration of western modes of production and consumption, which are simultaneously capable of imposing the same rationalized order as the "old imperialism," but with considerably less international opprobrium and under the illusion of voluntary interaction.

The inability to recognize this new order of what might be deemed, in modern parlance, informal imperialism, was a significant element of the collapse of the "New Left" in the 1970s—

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[156] Ibid., 62.
[157] Ibid., 63.
[158] Ibid., 64.

in Luke's view, though the "New Left" was not subverted directly by McCarthyist tactics or government intervention, its existence in the context of the Vietnam War and the domestic turmoil of the 1960s left them in a political bind in which "it either had to overthrow entirely the administrative regime or strengthen it with its innovative notions."[159] The New Left, by dint of the context from which it emerged (Luke contrasts them with the "prairie socialism" of the old left and Progressivism of the turn of the 20th century), inherently sought only to reform the state in which they had a vested interest as members of the intelligentsia, middle-class university graduates, and other "elites" with a "large stake in the existing reward structure of the system,"[160] positioned them to merely reintegrate themselves into an altered system (and regress into the divisive orthodoxy of Old Left political discourse) rather than advance a truly counter-bureaucratic system—thus creating an artificial, managed negativity subsumed by, and then remanifested in, bureaucratized methods such as electoral politics and political lobbying.[161] This served to strengthen the administrative state while advancing small scale reforms that remained within the purview of that state, whilst maintaining the illusion that participatory governmental reformism represented a valid avenue for the "New Left" to pursue its goals.

However, the other, less-remarked upon and more central to Luke (and Piccone's) understanding of counter-bureaucratic movements that were fundamentally advantageous to the extension of corporate interests were those made by transnational corporations in the wake of decolonization and service-economic transition, "which reopened the contradictions between state and corporation in advanced capitalist society"[162] that had previously been mended by the administrative-corporate regime of the post-World War and New Deal bureaucratic efforts.

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[159] Ibid., 66.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid., 67.

Where previously gunboat diplomacy and entrepreneurial capitalism had effected the

transitioned to a one-dimensional society, the secondary transition was effected without the aid

of state-sanctioned intervention and indeed often contravened the ostensible policies of state

economic regulatory monopoly—transnational corporations "sketched out their own *corporate*

foreign, economic, employment, and investment opportunities"[163] distinct from the interests of

the nation-states by whose interests they had previously been bound. In effect, where during the

era of bureaucratic rationalism imposed by the state via regulatory avenues on corporations in

service of the national interest (homogenizing as that interest may have been), as "full monopoly

capital" was attained, corporations instrumentalized the power of the state to serve their interests,

rather than the instrumentalization of corporate institutions in service of national interests.[164]

     Full monopoly capitalism, therefore, had the effect of reintroducing the element of

externality which had hitherto been lacking in the aftermath of the triumph of bureaucratic-

regulatory one dimensionality. This externality, where in the era before the regulatory triumph of

the new deal state and the subsequent cementation of monopoly capitalism had manifested itself

in organic terms (unions and workers collectives which sprang extemporaneously from

sociopolitical exigency as opposed to those sanctioned by the states), the new externality (or

negativity) was a manifestation of the self-interest of empowered transnational corporations. In

the context of cold-war proxy conflicts and the tremendous international opportunities produced

by decolonization, transnational entities, or "knowledge-intensive, technology exporting

industries"[165] that represent the crescendo of monopoly capitalism utilized their externality to

"instrumentally organize the entire world," including what were (and often still are) regarded as

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[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid., 68.

super-powers.[166] Simultaneously, corporations that had previously conceded certain elements of control to the state during the facilitated transition to monopoly capitalism (and one-dimensionality) began to reassert their economic interests in the domestic sphere of their nation-states of origin, particularly the United States. Privatization of social security, pension systems, healthcare, and virtually every element of the interventionist state "illustrate[d] the opening of a new counter-offensive against the state-supported labor unions."[167] Thus the transnational corporation, which had previously operated cooperatively with the state as part of a one-dimensional bureaucratic entity, began to assert its own interests and simultaneously encouraged the growth of complementary counter-bureaucratic movements, again emanating from manageable, procedural demands for reform operating within a negative space permitted ("purposely opened") by the bureaucratic system.[168]

These noncorporate counter-bureaucratic forces are, in Luke's view, managed by the state and social system in such a way that they provide a relief valve for the contradictory elements of monopoly capital in a phenomenological sense (which is to say, the lived experience of the subject-worker and their relative level of alienation) by ensuring such movements—such as Ralph Nader's abortive attempts at creating a broad system of consumer protection in the 1970s—did not accumulate enough political or material capital to fundamentally "disrupt or dismantle" the state or corporate system.[169]

This tendency, combined with neoliberal reforms to the nation state that involved the devolution of the provision of basic welfare to the local level and the decentralization of responsibility for the maintenance of those programs via systems such as block-grants and public

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[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid., 69.

private partnerships (revenue sharing), continue the counter-bureaucratic tendency of the diffusion of state power. Similarly, asserts Luke, in the wake of Watergate and other scandals that precipitated legislative regulation of the power of the executive branch—what Luke deems a "post-imperial presidency"—reduce the capacity of the executive to act against the interests of the artificially created negativity driven and maintained by corporate interests.[170]

Similarly, though perhaps less importantly (in terms of capacity to drive significant change), informal expressions of artificial negativity abound in particular revisions to the actual administrative capacities of the formerly one-dimensional bureaucratic state. What Luke refers to as "bureaucratic insurgency tactics"—essentially those which increase accountability and transparency within the increasingly diffused and devolved bureaucratic system, such as (particularly relevant to the contemporary reader) information leaks and transparency—have the effect of systematically accommodating artificial negativity in the form of democratically parameterized public participation in regulatory administration.[171] This has the overall effect of creating anti-bureaucratic systems that fulfill the essential roles of the previously homogenizing system, while simultaneously expressing an opposition to that system that stops short of demanding qualitative or fundamental change in its phenomenological reality.

Finally, Luke sees advances in communications technology as reopening spaces for cultural expression that had been previously reduced or eliminated by the homogenizing process of the bureaucratic transition effected by the achievement of civil rights, state-sanctioned unions, and other systems by which previously diffuse identities had been subsumed by the state-corporate compact. These, in tandem with the "alternative cultural movements" of the 1960s and 70s (student protests, black power, feminist movements, anti-war groups, etc) "sought to revive

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[170] Ibid., 70.
[171] Ibid.

artificially the personal specificity and group-based otherness that the standardizing dictates [of the transitional period's homogenizing implements]…had suppressed for four decades."[172] Thus, the age of artificial negativity is, in a sense, the resurrection of the particularity that had preceded the cementation of monopolistic capital and one-dimensionality—within the manageable parameters of the state-corporate system, however deregulated or diffused it may have become. The connection between all of these subversions of the homogenizing system—the rollback of the welfare state, the localization and atomization of administrative apparatuses, the reassertion of cultural identities and particularities and the assertion of transnational corporate interests abroad—is the thread of artificial negativity, "which emanates from within monopoly capital but is directed against the state-corporate regime."[173] Artificial negativity is ultimately a system whereby the maintenance of monopoly capital—albeit in a format that transcends the transitional period of state-corporate homogenization—is sustained and expressed in performative, particular social and political movements that alter the expressions of life under monopoly capitalism but are inherently unable to challenge the material-discursive hegemony of monopoly capital itself.

For Luke, this historical outline represents a process whereby hyper-rationalization on all levels leads inevitably to recursive re-rationalization and the breakdown of the managed, rational system, a "slippage in the instrumental command over capital expansion," disrupting the capacity of the system to provide the material necessities that maintain the artificiality of negativity within the Liberal system. "The most distinctive characteristic," writes Luke, "of artificial negativity is that it is counter-productive and can never become a substitute for the organic negativity that is no longer spontaneously generated."[174] It therefore follows, for Luke, that the necessity of

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[172] Ibid., 71.
[173] Ibid., 72.
[174] Ibid.

organic negativity will become apparent when the material effects of the crisis of re-rationalization force the subjects of monopoly capitalism to confront the contradictions by which the economic-political regime is increasingly ostensibly characterized. Therefore, "in spite of itself," the reified rationalism of the devolved, no longer one-dimensional Liberal system of transnational monopoly capitalism creates the opportunity for precisely the Picconean moment of subject-object identification. It is this sociological dialectic that opens the path for socially individuated emancipatory movements, premised on the reconstitution of organic negativity, and the possibility of qualitative change.[175] Thus, the particular interests of groups characterized (at least partially) by an opposition to the totally administered society can assert themselves distinctly without succumbing to the particularity of Liberal identitarianism.

Fall 1978: The Crisis of One-Dimensionality

In "The Crisis of One Dimensionality", Piccone expands upon assertions made in his essay from *The New German Review*, analyzing the nature of the crisis of critical theory and addressing the possibilities for revitalizing the moribund. Echoing "The Changing Function of Critical Theory," Piccone again asserts that the retention of Marxist ideology emanating from the 1930s lies at the heart of the inability of the contemporary left to reckon with the overwhelming nature of the one-dimensional society as a transition to one characterized by artificial negativity, a retention manifested in a failure to "critically dissect Marxism itself"[176] when confronted with the administrative, totalizing nature of fascism, Stalinism, and the New Deal, all of which represent homogenizing efforts on the parts of technocratic states, albeit characterized by tremendously variable degrees of physical repression. In Piccone's view, where intellectuals

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[175] Ibid.

[176] Paul Piccone, "The Crisis of One-Dimensionality," *Telos* 43-54, no. 35 (1978): 43, *Telos* online archives, http://journal.telospress.com/content/1978/35/43.abstract (accessed October 2016).

ought to have realized this confluence of rationalization, they failed to do so until it was too late—when one-dimensionality was fully articulated, it was already "historically obsolete" insofar as it described "a process of capitalist development already in the process of being superseded" by the artificial negativity attendant to re-rationalization.[177]

The psychoanalysis and microscopic social analysis of critical theorists, as well as the *long duree* ontological assertions about the arc of domination in western society on a scale reaching back to the classical era—neutered the dialectic, rooting it in what Piccone alternately refers to as a "biological" (psychoanalytic) and "objective" (quantitative) context, which prevented critical theory from recognizing its tardiness in its identification of the one-dimensional society and its implications for the future. Comparing critical theory, broadly, to the student movements of the 1960s, Piccone asserts that in the same fashion the student movements succeeded in merely reproducing "social relations under different labels," critical theory was unable to see beyond the pervasiveness of one-dimensionality, "thus missing the most fundamental new developments in advanced capitalism," the constitution of a system of artificially cultivated negativity.[178] The failure to recognize one-dimensionality as a mere transitional period between the triumph of a new type of domination—the "full domination" of capital—and the era from which Marxist orthodoxy emanates, that of entrepreneurial capitalism, created a precondition in which Marxist-oriented thinkers were unable to recognize and contend with the hegemony of capital and the dissolution of specificity necessary for the process of rationalization and re-rationalization (the latter sustained by the proliferation of artificial negativity).[179]

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[177] Piccone, "The Crisis of One-Dimensionality," 43.
[178] Ibid., 45.
[179] Ibid., 46.

To exemplify the failure on the part of the broad left to comprehend the fullness of this transition, Piccone cites the jubilant atmosphere surrounding the "defeat" of the United Nations forces involved in Vietnam. Where he had previously, in the 1960s, perceived third-world resistance to the extension of Western power as a potential source of external negativity, writing in 1978, Piccone had reformulated his understanding of the Vietnam war and its "loss" as essentially a triumph for the newly-empowered forces of transnational capitalism discussed at some length by Luke in the preceding essay. The celebration of a military failure, and the attendant perceived failure of imperialist policies, represents the fundamental misunderstanding of the new era of capital domination by the left due to its unwillingness to jettison the assumptions of orthodox Marxism generated during the era of entrepreneurial capitalism. "All that is necessary today to safeguard international domination," wrote Piccone, "is trade and cultural imperialism,"[180] echoing Luke's views that the proxy struggles of the cold-war were tremendously advantageous to transnational corporate entities no longer strictly tied to the formal imperial pursuits of the rationalized nation-state. Indeed, for Piccone, the Vietnam war had morphed from a traditional confrontation between western hegemony (wherein the power of the state served the interests of capital) to a "confrontation between a progressive and backward sector of capitalism"—transnational cultural domination and formal imperial domination—in which the former, progressive manifestation of the furtherance of capital interests prevailed.[181] This reevaluation of the significance of the Vietnamese conflict by Piccone represents a critical transition in his view of the nature of and manifestations of capital domination. The outcome of the war was, for Piccone and the new transnational entities, irrelevant, insofar as the only distinction in outcomes would be the state structure that mediated the administration of

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[180] Ibid., 47.
[181] Ibid.

unstoppable cultural imperialism dictated by the necessity of economic existence in a world dominated by capital. [182]

Indeed, the domination of capital is sustained by distinct mechanisms during the periods described by Piccone and Luke. During the entrepreneurial phase, capital expansion and society was predicated on the power of free agents in a non-interventionist (domestically) state that would engage in imperialism in order to extend capital overseas, thus allowing an influx of wealth to the benefit of the metropole and forestalling the success of the then-extant organic opposition. Following this came the transitory phase of state-administrative rationalization, which has already been described at length (and, crucially, was never properly accounted for in leftist theory as a transitional phase to a distinct version of transnational capitalism but was often misapprehended as a statist-bureaucratic movement towards implementation of progressive policy), which fundamentally had the effect of dissolving particularity and otherness, thereby creating a one-dimensional society. The one-dimensional society, however, in the absence of the mechanisms by which it had rationalized and homogenized itself (state intervention, suppression of dissidents, and so on) required the external safety valve of artificially cultivated negativity when it began the inevitable process of counterproductive re-rationalization. Thus, contends Piccone, it is at the nadir of economic rationalization that the state-administrative system, having sowed the seeds for its own dissolution in relying on the eternality of bureaucratic technocracy (which turned inward on itself), began to generate "bureaucratically sanctioned…system driven negativity" which, despite its counter-bureaucratic tendencies, fundamentally existed within the phenomenological scope of the bureaucratic political system. Thus, the organic negativity that constitutes a necessary discursive antecedent to the critical moment of subject-object identicality

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[182] Ibid.

(and therefore qualitative change) remains outside the reach of progressive reformers operating within the parametrized bureaucratic system.

"One need only examine," wrote Picccone, "what has recently happened to the black movement, women's organizations, and criminality in general to realize the pervasiveness of this change from the transition stage to that of full monopoly capital."[183] Where once rational homogenization characterized the transitional phase between monopoly capital on a transnational scale and the diffuse otherness of entrepreneurial capitalism, the characteristics of full monopoly capital compelled groups in the United States to seek "to artificially reconstruct an otherness which had long since been effectively destroyed."[184] These attempts, being inherently inorganic due to the fundamental absence of an existing otherness from which to derive their newly asserted identity, were coordinated from above by the liberal-bureaucratic system even as its transitory rationalization succumbed to the transnational characteristics of monopoly capital. Piccone builds upon this assertion by articulating a similar pattern in the development of the women's rights movements and a general rise in criminality during the 1970s—both are results of the reopening of a public sphere of negativity in which organic externalities are unable to coalesce because of the totalizing effects of the transitory phase. Indeed, Piccone goes so far as to characterize the Equal Rights Amendment as "progressive neither from the viewpoint of the new requirements of the [artificially negative, transnational] system nor from the depersonalized perspective of the private woman who sees in her femininity the last protection against total anonymity."[185] Where once homogeneity was enforced via a deft combination of subtle coercion and state-administrative regulatory measures, the era of artificial negativity necessitates both the

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[183] Ibid., 48.
[184] Ibid., 49.
[185] Ibid.

reintroduction of (qualitatively different) spheres of negativity and, in response to their qualitative difference, formerly unnecessary repressive measures such as the death penalty, resulting from the necessity of repressing the "brutalized and depersonalized individual who breaks free of the shackles of internal control mechanisms."[186]

What Piccone articulates is a system of counterintuitive reification and cyclical repression of the possibility of external negativity, supplanted by the bureaucratic artificial negativity represented by the devolution of state powers to the local level (as discussed by Luke) and the reintroduction of external mechanisms such as policing systems and, with the Liberalization of the regulatory state, poverty control mechanisms and the welfare state in general.

Significantly, in "The Crisis of One Dimensionality," Piccone addresses the question of the effect of transnational liberalism on what he deems the "new international context," in which the managerial intelligentsia becomes characterized by occidental jingoism and the working class is compelled to exist in a sort of international state of misery characterized by decreased production and an intensification of escapism. Presciently, in describing the effect this cycle has on the Soviet Union during the state of détente, Piccone predicts an inevitable "resurgence of traditional religion" and "an intensification of cynical individualism…and the bureaucracy toward an unprincipled opportunism whose main goal is merely the retention of existing privileges,"[187] a prescient prediction of post-Soviet eastern European affairs—indeed, a decade prior to the collapse of the USSR, Piccone already characterizes the results of the new transnational order (in which even ostensibly communist states rely on the hegemonic

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[186] Ibid., 50.
[187] Ibid.

transnational market) as one in which the "gradual deterioration of Russia to a sub-imperialist power" becomes inevitable.[188]

Interestingly, however, Piccone also addresses the Chinese model alongside the Russian one, and fails to take into account the possibility that China might simultaneously Liberalize its market in line with the new global order while simultaneously retaining the repressive instruments of state bureaucracy—characterizing it as intractable Stalinist, he characterizes the "inherent tendency of the Chinese model…not only increasingly towards bureaucratic collectivism but Stalinism and its irresolvable internal conflicts."[189] Piccone's dismissal of the probability of Chinese reform, situated alongside a level-headed and accurate characterization of the Eastern Bloc's increasing reliance on western economic hegemony, is a striking contrast and demonstrative of the degree to which Piccone relies on notions of societal inertia to underscore his philosophical arguments.

It is at this juncture that Piccone articulates the heart of his international argument regarding the continued hegemony of the western capitalist model on a global scale, characterizing it as essentially unassailable due to the reintroduction of expansive—and intensive, as both are not mutually exclusive—process of unequal exchange between the first and third worlds, which fuels the consumptive culture of the capitalist west while exporting the ecological and social problems attendant to the extraction of natural resources necessary to sustain consumption overseas.[190] This new variety of unequal exchange, which his driven by a fundamentally different type of coercion than the era of gunboat diplomacy, is inherently invulnerable to the basic objectivist orientation of Communist economic arguments which

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[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid., 52.

concern themselves almost exclusively with "challenging capitalism on *economic* grounds while relegating questions of *meaning* and *value* to a cultural dimension degraded to an epiphemonal status."[191] Therefore, in Piccone's view, the only viable avenue for authentic opposition to the spread of capital hegemony is not the renewal of existing economic arguments favored by communists—particularly when the lived experience of the capitalist first world, in its consumptive throes, continues to raise the quality of life for significant proportions of the first and third world while simultaneously lacking any significant economic alternative—are cultural avenues capable of "demystifying technocratic management, scientist ideologies, [and] hierarchical relations in everyday life."[192]

Again, however, Piccone perceives a hopeful avenue through which this cultural opposition to the material hegemony of transnational capitalism might manifest itself. Somewhat surprisingly, from a contemporary perspective, he evinces a singular hope in the leftist political trajectory of Southern Europe, characterizing the Italian communist party as an authentic mass-movement characterized by a dual recognition that the socially homogenized social-democratic systems of Northern Europe constitute a "historical dead end, and that the Russian model is even worse."[193] Similar to his perception that the creation of free spaces in the context of late capitalism could, with the application of the historical dialectic to critical theory with the aim of constructing a self-conscious qualitatively revolutionary movement in the west, he perceives the Italian, Spanish, and to a lesser extent, French political structures as conducive to the emergence of a mass-cultural movement under the aegis of communist parties. These parties, existing in a context distinct from the German hegemonic social democracy which has maintained itself via

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[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid., 51.
[193] Ibid., 52.

the persistent suppression of left opposition, are positioned, he believed, to "successfully attack the consumerist model," thereby undermining the bureaucratized Soviet socialist model and providing a viable alternative to the "new *Pax Americana*" which will "reopen the debate on the meaning of socialism, no longer confined to its economic component" but expanded to address the cultural characteristics of technocratic domination in everyday life. [194]

Fall 1980: Why Did The Left Collapse?

By 1980—the generally accepted year of the triumph of the Washington Consensus and international neoliberalism—Piccone (like other illiberal "left" philosophers, such as Murray Bookchin[195]) had come to fully accept what he regarded as the utter irrelevancy of Marxism in the modern era. In "Why Did The Left Collapse," Piccone demonstrates the degree to which he had revised his estimate of Marxism and its companion ideologies along the anarchist spectrum. Where once they had been understood as, essentially, patients nearing death and in need of life-saving care via the process of dialectical self-understanding, by 1980, even palliative care for the ossified Marxist traditions became an impossible pathway towards revolutionary change for Piccone. Though he had alluded to these basic notions before—that the very principles of Marxist thought must be revised or discarded—it is not until 1980 that Piccone is willing to unambiguously assert that the Left has is not merely in need of a course correction, but requires a "careful reexamination of the very meaning of the Left" which has "long since ceased to be

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[194] Paul Piccone, "Why Did The Left Collapse?" *Telos* 91-97, no.46 (1980): 54, *Telos* online archives. http://journal.telospress.com/content/1980/46.toc (accessed October 2016).

[195] Murray Bookchin was a late 20th century American political philosopher of Russian-Jewish extraction who was known for his participation in the working-class movement and his subsequent construction of ecological anarchism, which emphasized mutualism, diffuse social structures, and environmentalism. Bookchin was vehemently anti-liberal, anti-capitalist, and an exponent of qualitative change in much the same vein as Piccone; recently, his work has taken on increased relevance with its influence of the founder of the Kurdish YPG, Abdullah Ocalan. Bookchin, Murray. 1999. *The Murray Bookchin Reader*. Ed. Janet Biehl. (New York, NY: Black Rose Books).

radical, does not have even the faintest idea of a meaningful alternative to the existing

order….[and] it has overlooked that its strategy has long since become conformist and

uncritical"[196] in the sense that it has succumbed to Liberal internalization via petty reformism

and integration into systematic, quantitative, participatory Liberal politics. This tendency

towards internalization was amplified by the common thread of social homogenization inflicted

in the transitional phase of capitalism, which fundamentally precludes the evolution of radically-

minded external negativities with qualitatively different models for the function of society,

which, in Piccone's view, cannot (or can only with tremendous difficulty) emerge from the

monopoly culture of late capitalism.

In "Why Did the Left Collapse," Piccone analyzes and articulates the fundamental and

historical factors that had rendered Marxism—and to a significantly lesser extent, anarchism—

irrelevant decades prior to 1980. Indeed, though we see a glimmer of this dissatisfaction in his

earlier work, even in 1979 Piccone held out some hope for a vision of emancipatory party

politics in the less hegemonically structured (to his mind) southern European states. A mere one

year later, Piccone has discarded the possibility of *any* revivification of either leftist tradition,

concluding that both were manifestations and reflections of previous historical eras that had been

transcended during the well-articulated transition from entrepreneurial to monopoly capitalism,

the latter facilitated by the administrative state. Throughout the course of Piccone's intellectual

evolution, the concept of otherness, generally correlating to subjectivity and the capacity of the

individual to attain the sort of subject-object identification that precedes the acquisition of

revolutionary consciousness, has been of critical importance. In "Why Did the Left Collapse,"

Piccone essentially concedes that the traditional is devoid of critical subjectivity: that the

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[196] Piccone, "Why did the Left Collapse?" 92.

"collective subjectivity" of Marxism's "historical otherness has turned out to be statism, bureaucratism, and the gulag," all attributable to the "swamps of the class analysis."[197] This is a distinct break from Marxism in a holistic sense, particularly for someone who, a decade earlier, had focused his intellectual efforts on the constitution of a subject capable of attaining broad class analysis through the concrete action combination of theory and praxis in "Phenomenological Marxism."

With regards to anarchism, Piccone is equally dismissive, characterizing it as "simply seeking to vindicate the radical features of the bourgeois project," which "presupposes precisely the kind of full-fledged individuality" that has been, in Piccone's analysis, utterly annihilated by the triumph of the monopolistic-administrative society. Indeed, for Piccone (reflecting some of his personal contempt for academia and its structures) he contends that, given the degree to which anarchism is premised on the necessity of subjective individuality broadly unavailable to the body politic, its sole appeal is to a "privileged minority that has already managed to escape collective McDonaldization"[198]—a minority characterized in his previous essays as those allowed to operate within the spaces of artificial negativity opened in the stage of monopoly capitalism, particularly those within universities. Thus, like all supposed otherness that thrives in such artificial spaces, anarchist thought is, in his mind, equally integrated into the system as supposedly alternative Marxist conceptions of society—thoroughly appropriated by the artificially manageable negative and theoretically unsound in its inability to "articulate socially possible and politically legitimate forms of authority" in the context of late-capitalist society that

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[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.

do not inherently require the material dismantling of the system and, thus, tremendous destruction and suffering.[199]

Re-exhibiting his tendency to articulate concepts in terms of sociohistorical conditions—which, despite the abstraction of the artificial negativity thesis, remains fundamentally rooted in the phenomenological changes of the monopolized lived-experience engendered by the infiltration of the administrative state—Piccone views the sum total of traditional left wing thought as the remnant of past historical stages. Both emerged as a response to the prevailing conditions of pre-monopolistic capitalism, and are discursively rooted in the social capacity to produce otherness that existed prior to the transition period of post-New Deal society. They are inherently discredited by their irrelevance to the sociohistorical conditions of monopoly capitalism— Marxism, for Piccone, reflected the relatively dynamic capacity of the entrepreneurial phase of capitalism to generate negativity in the form of autonomously organized labor unions characterized by various degrees of radicalism (and thus generalized heterogeneity, another characteristic of the entrepreneurial phase of American capitalist development) which had been, as previously noted, rendered utterly impotent by the domination of international monopoly capital.[200] Similarly, Anarchism was a remnant of both the Enlightenment *and* the era of entrepreneurial capitalism—distinct from Marxism, however, insofar as it was concerned with the reconstitution of either an "idyllic precapitalist existence" or ameliorating (rather than stateless rationalization, as Marxism and its scientific overtones implied during the entrepreneurial phase) the dehumanizing and destructive tendencies of capitalism in general.[201] Thus, for Piccone, Marxism and Anarchism were both manifestations of the "social conscience"

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[199] Ibid., 93.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid., 92.

of transcended stages of historical development and therefore in the age of transnational

hegemony constitute little more than, quoting Karl Korsch,[202] "reactionary utopias"[203] inherently

incapable of confronting the newly manifested tendencies of monocultural advanced capitalism.

He further asserts, shoring up his justification for the total dismissal of all but the most

basic (that is to say, desire for a revolutionary alternative to the existing order) elements of

Marxist and Anarchist thought, that the procedural, administrative, and technical elements of

American politics in the late-20th century are incompatible with the generation of subjectivity in

the traditional Leftist sense. "Over the last half century" writes Piccone, "the very character of

politics has changed by displacing the traditional arena as well as potential constituencies,"

insofar as the foundation for traditional politics (i.e. government by relative consensus, which

relies on self-interested and discrete entities furthering their interests via compromise) has

dissipated in the age of "manipulated consciousness," which has eliminated the self-interested

unique constituencies and, thus, the capacity for the political arena to effect qualitative change.[204]

Indeed, the Left, failing to recognize its immateriality in an age of constructed consciousness

administered by a homogenizing cultural industry, inadvertently became a mere quantitative

reifier, internalizing itself via participation in non-political politics and rendering it one of the

"shock troops of capitalist rationalization."[205]

It is at this point that Piccone begins to draw out, in more specific terms, some of the

oblique references he has made to the constitution of the interventionist or welfare state and the

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[202] Karl Korsch was a German Communist philosopher, responsible for the publication of *Marxism and Philosophy*, a critically important evaluation of Hegelian reasoning in Marxism. He was also a member of the German communist party, and was exiled from Germany upon the Nazi seizure of power, eventually fleeing to the United States. Korsch, Karl. 2008. *Marxism and Philosophy*. Edited by Fred Halliday. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.
[203] Piccone, "Why did the Left Collapse?." 93.
[204] Ibid., 93.
[205] Ibid.

effect the left has had on the perpetuation of these institutions. Communist organizers in the prewar era who, in tandem with the New Deal and institutions like the National Labor Relations Board, corporatized the previously diffuse representatives of the working class are a parallel to the civil rights organizers of the 1960s, who, for Piccone, corporatized and integrated disenfranchised southern African Americans in a fashion that would have unforeseen, dire consequences in terms of a general social capacity to generate organic negativity. Essentially, the rationalization of the economy during the transitional phase of the mid-20th century was comorbid with the rationalization of social spheres, which retained distinction and therefore subjectivity, eliminating, in his mind, the existing otherness of African American southerners. The result of this broad rationalization, as previously alluded to in his discussion of the Left's fragmentation into quantitative participants in political rationalization, was the decimation of the civil society and the public sphere.[206]

Similarly, the Left had failed to confront virtually every other element of the monopolized society by operating entirely within the quantitative sphere of capitalist rationalization, even if they did so unwittingly. Pursing the "optimal balance between investments and consumption which as at the same time socially legitimate and economically feasible" the Left created a bulwark against the crises inherent to capitalist boom-bust cycles, thus inherently conceding that the capitalist framework could exist perpetually in the limbo of tepid reformism substantiated by a depoliticized society. Materially, too, Piccone begins to integrate ecological arguments (which had been present to a lesser degree in earlier works) vis-à-vis the finite limit on our collective capacity to extract and consume resources, arguing that the left had utterly "failed to confront the ecological long-run viability of a system of cybernated

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[206] Ibid.

waste"[207] (a concept very similar to those advanced by *Telos* published eco-anarchist Murray Bookchin) and a failure to understand the conflict in Vietnam as a crisis of "overadministration" and a general shortcoming of the depoliticized administrative state to contend with foreign crises, instead understanding it in an outmoded entrepreneurial framework that placed foreign intervention squarely in the opaque and irrelevant box of formal imperialism.

Piccone's justifications for the condemnation of the welfare state of the New Deal and the attempts made at extending it by Great Society initiatives, the extension of formal civil rights to oppressed populations, and his criticisms of traditional left-wing sacred cows such as the most basic state-sanctioned redistribution must be taken within the context of the broad intellectual framework he (along with Tim Luke) had articulated in the era of artificial negativity. Taken out of that context, they bear a striking resemblance to arguments offered by the neoliberal right in their advocacy for trickle-down economics as a new manifestation of economic rationalization, complete with the tinge of nigh-undeniable racism upon which the Southern Strategy relied. It must therefore be noted that, at this juncture, Piccone has effectively transcended the traditional left-right divide in favor of a revolutionarily distinct worldview that neither tolerates nor sanctions the quantitative reformism of transcended intellectual frameworks. Some of what he writes in "Why Did The Left Collapse," taken out of this complicated framework, are easily interpreted as conservative—or even reactionary—manifestations of racial animus never directly articulated by Piccone himself.

This is most clearly displayed in his discussion of affirmative action and the "administrative enfranchisement"[208] of minorities—in this case, black southerners and women via the feminist movement. As with other previously integrated communities, the penetration of

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[207] Ibid., 94.
[208] Ibid.

the state apparatus via administration of welfare to materially impoverished black communities precipitated the "disintegration of organic social bonds" and, in what could easily be interpreted as a striking denial of the agency of impoverished African Americans (but is consistent with Piccone's framework of depersonalization), the condemnation "of the black community to the permanent status of de-facto second rate citizenry" owing to a "deadly dependence on the welfare state."[209] The most significant effect of this intervention, beyond the vague notion of generational dependency, was the opening of a gulf between "elite" and middle-class African Americans from the African Americans with whom they had previously culturally and materially intertwined due to the unanimity of disenfranchisement. The combination of the flight of the black elite from the black community itself and the reliance upon government intervention had the effect of—like with Unions and other sources of external negativity—cementing "the management rather than the emancipation of ghetto blacks."[210] It is notable that Piccone does not extend this particular argument to similar groups dependent upon federal intervention and effectively depoliticized or integrated as a result, such as Appalachian whites or other perennially impoverished racial-majority groups, though in his framework such groups had ceased to exist prior to the 1960s.

The other principal movement of the 1960s, the feminist movement, is regarded by Piccone as having been even more holistically compromised than the state of African American emancipation. More than having merely been coopted by the state and reduced, broadly, to an instrument of rationalization and homogenization, the women's movement not only succumbed to the administrative state but was simultaneously commodified in a manner distinct from the "dependency" (which, in concrete political terms, cemented the African American voting block

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[209] Ibid., 95.
[210] Ibid.

as dependably in favor of reification of the welfare state[211]) inflicted upon African Americans. Piccone articulates what can only be described as disappointment in the failed potential of the women's movement, in that it was complicit from its very conception in its own commodification and, worse, facilitation of the penetration of state homogenization into spheres which had hitherto resisted the relentlessly totalizing administration of monopoly capitalism. Instead, the women's movement of the 1960s engendered a tremendous attack on one of the few remaining social institutions emanating from a pre-capitalist stage: the family.

By principally emphasizing the capacity of women as autonomous individuals—or economic units—and their correlate ability to engage in the market at levels previously denied to them by systematic sexism, the feminist movement "immediately rendered problematic any relation not based on the exchange principle" and supplanted the organicism of filial piety by "indict[ing] any lingering family function presupposing an organic division of labor," contributing to the commodification of previously existing gender roles. For Piccone, this meant the industrialization of the last vestiges of labor that had previously resisted integration into the managed system of monopoly capitalism. Essentially, via the feminist pursuit of the revision or deconstruction of gender roles, "the women's liberation movement successfully homogenized female consciousness" in a manner conducive to the general elimination of organic negativity originating in social spheres which had not been fully rationalized into the prevailing system.[212] Though he acknowledges the legitimate radicalism of certain elements of the movement—what he describes as an attempt to revitalize femininity as an analogue to socialism, contrasting the inherent masculinity of competitive capitalism—these elements were ultimately subject to homogenization owing to, like anarchist visions, their inability to translate theory into socially

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[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid.

legitimate and materially possible arrangements of power. The dual processes of family deconstruction and political integration precipitated by the mistakes of the women's movement led Piccone to characterize contemporaneous feminism as having "degenerated into a convenient and fashionable stance for upwardly mobile career women,"[213] thus reifying and perpetuating the integrality of individual growth parameterized by capitalist discourse. It became, essentially, a bourgeois affectation that served as little more than a social veneer to legitimize the reconstruction of the organic family as an economic unit.

Both of these examples demonstrate the increasingly anti-liberal bent of Piccone's philosophy entering the Reagan era. Where once the particularity of discrete social groups and their interests had, in previous historical stages, represented a possible source for the regulatory negativity necessity for the sane administration of a heterogeneous society, the cooptation of particularity in the context of monopoly capitalism now meant the eternal reproduction of capitalist values. Thus, for Piccone, the only possibilities for emancipatory collective action— and the only avenues in which the left had enjoyed any success, however minor—existed in the broadest possible context, what he regards as attempts to defend the "common good."[214] While he qualifies his assertion that the Left has enjoyed some success here with his typical affirmation that the defense of collective (in the broadest sense) material interests is merely quantitative and regulatory rather than evincing the qualitative consciousness, the necessity of which looms large in every piece he writes, he concedes that it has managed to "help eliminate the most obviously problematic features"[215] of monopoly capitalism.

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[213] Ibid.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid.

The particular example in which he perceives a certain level of progress dovetails with his emerging understanding of the ecological destruction inherent to capitalist production both domestically and abroad—state utilities, by merit of being high regulated monopolies subject to public administration (rather than private capital), are able to perform genuinely political acts in a depoliticized age. Political, in the sense Piccone uses it here, refers to "the question of collective quality of life against narrow short-run efficiency criteria," thereby reconstituting (albeit on a limited scale) the otherwise eliminated public sphere he discussed earlier in this essay.[216] "Only in this last instance," in reference to the emergence of energy alternatives to fossil fuels, "do emancipatory interests seem to emerge alongside purely corporative ones."[217] Though this is small consolation insofar as these negativities perform a solely regulatory function and, because of their relationship with Liberal administrative procedures, are fundamentally artificial rather than organic (and thus serve to reify the status quo), they do offer an example of the sort of concrete action with the effect of improving lived experiences he had outlined a decade earlier in "Phenomenological Marxism."

That is the only instance in which Piccone has any hope for the domestic "left"—as a collective entity capable of ameliorating the most physically destructive elements of hegemonic capitalism. Indeed, beyond the niche example of energy policy, Piccone rearticulates Korsch's notion of "reactionary utopianism" as characterizing the modern left, with an emphasis on the reactionary element—"the Left, as the social conscience of the welfare state, finds itself checkmated" by its position between anti-bureaucratic egalitarianism at its base and the inherently bureaucratic nature of New Deal leftism, leaving it impotent to address the fundamental issues of capitalist existence. This compels the left to "side on the same corner with

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[216] Ibid., 96.
[217] Ibid.

the most reactionary forces of protectionist capitalist interests" in its resistance to the inevitable neoliberalization of transnational corporate logic and, domestically, to unthinkingly support social reifiers such as the civil rights movement which "merely defuse resentment by dealing with symptoms without penetrating into real causes."[218] In another manifestation of what, out of the context of Piccone's framework, would be initially regarded as a profoundly conservative perspective, he also refers to the advocacy for reproductive equality and sexual liberation in general in somewhat moralizing terms, claiming that the Left's position on issues such as abortion cause it to appear as "an advocate of irresponsibility and immorality, and thus as one of the prime causes of the general social deterioration."[219] It is difficult to discern whether Piccone is merely referring to the optics—or what he might deem social legitimacy—of these movements and the degree to which their appearance facilitates corporatization or whether he genuinely perceives reproductive rights as part of the penetration of administrative tendencies into even the most personal organic spheres.

It seems clear, however, that what Piccone is doing is engaging directly with the arguments of the right and, rather than dismissing them out of hand as bourgeois or self-interested in the fashion of an orthodox Leftist, he understands them as socially legitimate, or at least socially appealing in the context of a homogenized (socially and morally) society and therefore counterproductive to the pursuit of qualitative change. In his conclusion, Piccone outlines what he perceives as the only possibility for the revitalization of truly organic negativity—an existentialist critique of "the enlightenment and bourgeois civilization" with a singular focus on the maintenance of precapitalist subjectivity, which continues to exist almost exclusively in manifestations dismissed or inimical to the traditional left—"subjectivist quasi-

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[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid.

religious precategorical dimension[s] which has not yet and can never fully capitulate to the logic of the institution…," a reference to the persistent organicism of "reactionary" spheres such as domestic and religious life.

Thus, for Piccone, any hope for qualitative change must emerge from these precapitalist spheres capable of producing negativity that have been rejected by the institutional left and generally, but not utterly, appropriated by the institutional right. In order to effect this change, the "left must reappropriate and radicalize the right's critique and most successful organizational forms"[220] rather than continuing to perpetuate theoretical models premised on transcended phases of capitalist development. The left, therefore, must take a historical view of the possibility of long-term change effected by the appropriation of these strategies rather than hoping for the impossible—spontaneous revolutionary consciousness to be universally attained. Instead, the left must instrumentalize its own instrumentalization, but attempt to effect change by "consciously participating in the most advanced forms of capitalist rationalization" and, in doing so, sow the seeds for the "reconstitution of civil society" during the next phase of capitalist reification and rationalization. "The successful reconstitution of civil society" concludes Piccone, "will then become the precondition for the reconstitution of individuality and the resurgence of emancipatory possibilities."[221]

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[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid., 97.

Conclusion

While political philosophy may not be inherently prescriptive, it is possible to, theoretically, construct lucid, descriptivist works of political science that do not explicitly posit alternative structures. However, the act of engaging critically with social structures typically compels the reader to attempt to answer these criticisms via the articulation of some alternative system, particularly if the author does not. Thus political philosophy finds itself in the unenviable position of having to propose an ostensibly workable solution to issues so complex that merely identifying problematic elements in social structures is in itself a significant undertaking. Furthermore, political philosophy and critical theory are steeped in what is best described as a totalizing discourse that must engage with social structures, the hard sciences, geopolitics, "pure" philosophy, cultural production, industrial capacity, etc. Therefore the astute political scientist often finds themselves in a position where they are forced to incorporate into their arguments or analyses disparate sources, concepts, and methodologies in order to systematize the chaotic and effervescent constellation of human behaviors and hierarchies into an understandable framework.

Therefore, attempting to analyze and understand the intellectual trajectory of political philosophy in the context of the late twentieth century means, fundamentally, acknowledging the complexity of the political philosopher and the degree to which their work is the manifestation of a very particular type of expertise. Political science is a product of discursive subtleties accumulated, certainly in the case of Paul Piccone, over the course of decades of rigorous academic work characterized by a nuanced engagement with the many layers of complexity underpinning the major schools of political thought and the confluences between them. Piccone's unique socio-historical approach combined with his persistent capacity to engage with academic concepts while remaining outside the parameters of university institutions positions him as a

particularly salient example of all of these tendencies in political philosophy. These tendencies are particularly evident in charting the trajectory of his political position over the course of *Telos'* publication, as Piccone moved from a relatively run-of-the-mill late-20th century Marxist to something entirely outside of the contemporary left-right dichotomy.

Piccone's principal concern was with the progressive internalization of all externalities— what amounted to all individuality and, in an existential sense, the very authenticity of social production itself—being subsumed by the relentlessly administrative, qualitative Liberal state. He feared the universality of tepid reformism would be instrumentalized by an emerging, transnational class of elites whose power would be maintained by a massive bureaucratic entity to which the citizens of the world had become accustomed, facilitating the terminal commodification of what few elements of human life had remained outside of the administered system. Piccone's fears emanated from an inherent sympathy for the great mass of human experience and, despite his cynicism vis-à-vis the actual revolutionary potential of the body politic, he nonetheless devoted his intellectual activity to identifying the possible conditions in which emancipation could be achieved. While Piccone may have found solutions to this in, initially, revisionist Marxism (the inherent tendencies of which I believe he never fully left behind), he was singularly unbound by the dogmatic parameters of traditional political arrangements.

In traditional Marxist philosophy, there are two critical components to the construction of revolutionary alternatives to existing arrangements—theory and praxis. One informs the other in a reciprocal arrangement that, in theory, ought to advance the social dialectic through a continual process in which a broad social consciousness is attained, issues identified via theoretical constructs are practically addressed, and the dialectic advances and is thus presented with an

opportunity to reach another stage of self-consciousness, perpetually improving society. While this is a simplification—the dialectic need not advance "forward," nor is social consciousness the only inherent precursor to manifestations of praxis (since material conditions are a critical element of Marxist theory—it offers a basic characterization of the Marxist understanding of history).

Piccone's principal pursuit was, above all else, the identification and facilitation of this moment of broad-self consciousness that would permit the real-world manifestation of revolutionary praxis. He felt the relentless advancement of the totalizing state had already begun to stifle society's capacity to produce externalities capable of identifying these issues, replacing intellectual elites with technicians and parameterizing the nature of human consciousness so as to eventually preclude the concoction of revolutionary theory. As he worked throughout the course of the 1970s, after the ostensible triumph of the civil rights movement, the failure of the student protests, and the increasingly evident triumph of the neoliberal consensus at home and abroad, Piccone's predictions became increasingly prescient.

It was the construction of the thesis of artificial negativity that marked *Telos*' interpretation of late-stage monopoly capitalism. The idea that carefully managed systematic opposition to existing sociopolitical arrangements constituted the safest release valve for the maintenance of the status quo was not necessarily an original notion in its broadest strokes, but the specific characteristics of the administrative state and the avenues—particularly the University—associated with the promulgation of this negativity was uniquely *Telos*. Our collective inability to escape from a totalizing system and create a qualitative—not reformist nor merely statistical, but a holistic change to the material arrangements and hierarchies by which

society is constructed—change would, without intervention, perpetuate this carefully deployed arrangement into the distant future.

In 2018, Piccone's predictions seem as substantial as ever. Political theater, carefully managed by for-profit entities, increasingly characterizes our public discourse. Cybernation and atomization, with the attendant devotion to social particularities and a corollary lack of interest in qualitative change, are encouraged by the prevailing Liberal ethos in politics. Student movements retain their class character and remain as ineffective and dogmatic as they did when Piccone wrote in 1969. Conflict abroad and the squelching of alternative systems, though less explicit than during the proxy interventions of the cold war, remains the major catalyst in Western foreign policy. In this sense, the works of Paul Piccone and his analyses remain as relevant today as when they were written, particularly as the symptoms of ubiquitously administered transnational capitalism are exacerbated by the twin processes of unprecedented domestic capital accumulation and the reassertion of geopolitical rivalries in the post cold-war context.

Piccone hoped to identify the sociological precursors to a moment of revolutionary self-identification among those who do not compose the new administrative class, a group considerably broader than the traditional proletariat of unreformed Marxism. Piccone saw the possibility of revolutionary movements emerging from the cybernated alienation and homogenization of late capitalism, characterized by the spasmodic throes of dying human authenticity—and while his theory was largely concerned with understanding the possibility of an egalitarian, qualitative revolution, it is also a medium through which we can attempt to understand the changes of the 21st century. The Arab Spring and its ultimately failed assertion of the primacy of political and socioeconomic Liberalism and the relitigation of immemorial

irredentist disputes precipitating (among other things) the Russian-led invasion of the Crimea and eastern Ukraine are both indicative of the historical currents identified by Piccone and the *Telos* cohort.

Simultaneously, opposition movements at home that had previously been deprived of mainstream legitimacy and thus expunged from the acceptable discursive parameters dictated by the administrative-Liberal state have reasserted their capacity to attract domestic adherents. Authoritarian ethnonationalism has been rendered politically legitimate—albeit in an atomized, diffuse fashion—and crept into public view in an unprecedented manner, as illustrated most effectively by the Charlottesville "United the Right" rally of August 2017, which created an international furor due to its open inclusion of neo-Nazi and Ku Klux Klan associated groups and catalyzed a popular fascination with their motivations. Reactions to administrative totality have also manifested themselves via the popularization of deregulatory movements on the right of the Libertarian spectrum, while the traditional Left has slowly began to deemphasize its Liberalism in favor of orthodox economic agitation, most obviously via the rise of the Democratic Socialists of America. Understanding the sociopolitical catalysts for these oppositional movements will be a critical task for historians, philosophers, and agitants alike—and the writings of *Telos* have a tremendous, and largely unexplored, contribution to make.

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