

FROM LIBERATION TO RECONSTRUCTION: THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE LIFE OF HAROLD WOLPE

Harold Wolpe Memorial Lecture¹

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A year after Harold Wolpe's death in 1996, the newly established Wolpe Trust convened in his honor an international conference on "The Political Economy of Social Change in South Africa." It took place at the University of Western Cape where Wolpe had worked for the previous 5 years. Staged three years after the inauguration of the Government of National Unity, it brought ministers, members of parliament, party leaders, activists together with engaged intellectuals from universities and non-governmental organizations. Former comrades, who had taken very different trajectories after apartheid, were reknotted in an exciting confrontation. Intellectuals from the universities and NGOs flexed their critical muscles, suggesting the betrayal of the ANC's original program, only to be harangued by the political leadership for not appreciating the rapid and progressive transformation of South Africa. The drama of the New South Africa was played out in this academic setting.

¹I would like to thank the Harold Wolpe Trust, and in particular AnnMarie Wolpe, for inviting me to give this lecture. It is an honor indeed. For nearly 20 years I was a close student of Harold Wolpe's writings. It has been a daunting task to come to terms with them as a whole, in fact far too big a task for a single individual. This lecture, therefore, is part of a collective enterprise, nurtured and sponsored by the Wolpe Trust, to continue the intellectual legacy of Harold Wolpe. In rewriting this paper I have relied on the comments of AnnMarie Wolpe, and Eddie Webster, Stephen Gelb and on the lively and strangely different responses of audiences in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town (July 21, 22 and 29th, 2004).

The extraordinary event was a tribute not only to Harold Wolpe, to his place in the liberation struggle as a politically committed theorist of the South African revolution, but also to the rich political culture of South Africa. Across class and race, everyday life is steeped in political practice, never far removed from ideological, and thus theoretical justification. From the beginning the liberation movement attracted deeply intellectual freedom fighters as well as politically committed academics. The clash of critical intellect and political will is dramatized in the life of Harold Wolpe.

For many Harold Wolpe is remembered for his daring jail escape in 1963, humiliating the Nationalist Party Government that claimed to have rounded up all the key ANC leaders, following its swoop on Lilliesleaf Farm in Rivonia. Wolpe had not been present at Rivonia, but as a longstanding member of the South African Communist Party since his university days at Wits, and then as a lawyer representing leading figures in the ANC, he was a wanted man.² The break from Marshall Square in 1963, then the Johannesburg headquarters of the security police, had led him to England where he began a new career as sociologist first at Bradford University, then at the Polytechnic of North London and finally for many years at the University of Essex. Once in exile, he became a legend in his own country so that when he returned for the first time in 1990, a talk he gave at Wits was announced, “Harold Wolpe, Live”.

Although cut off from the movement in South Africa by a state that had banished him and banned his writings, in circuitous ways his ideas from exile seeped through the portholes of apartheid. It was his undying commitment to the liberation movement that nearly cost him and his family their lives, but at the same that gave the scientific impetus

² It was a rare occasion that Wolpe would speak of his escape but fortunately his wife, AnnMarie Wolpe has documented the amazing story in a dramatic recounting of that and much else. See *The Long Way Home* (London: Virago Press, 1994).

to his sociology. For Wolpe revolution had to be carefully calibrated and so it really mattered to get things right. One couldn't afford to be wrong. Too much was at stake. He was as punishing of himself as he was uncompromising in his critique of others. In his writing he permitted himself only the logic chopping, rigorous and detailed argumentation of the lawyer he once was. The drama of his theorizing comes not from his prose, which is often turgid and abstract, but from the knowledge that he was defending the liberation of his country, restless in the dock.

Writings from exile have a long and distinguished pedigree. Trotsky wrote his *History of the Russian Revolution* while in exile in Turkey and *The Revolution Betrayed* in Norway, Lenin wrote *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* in Zurich and had to escape to Finland to write *State and Revolution*, Luxemburg wrote *The Accumulation of Capital* in Switzerland, Gramsci wrote his *Prison Notebooks* under the relaxed eye of fascist jail guards, while Marx wrote his *Capital* while exiled in London which is also where Harold Wolpe wrote his most important analyses of South Africa. Being in exile gave him the space to develop a new research program for the study of South Africa, its present, its past, and its future. Removed from his publics Wolpe made a virtue out of necessity, proclaiming the analysis of consciousness to be the monopoly of political organs while the sociologist determines the structural conditions that lie behind and give rise to consciousness – structural conditions that also define the strategic possibilities of any given historical conjuncture. Here surely was a convenient division of labor -- structure for the social scientist and agency for the party – a division of labor that flies in the face of South Africa's rich traditions of social history.

Wolpe returned to South Africa in 1991, for 5 long years before he died. He didn't take up a position at one of the privileged historically-white-universities but at the resource poor University of Western Cape. There he set up an Education Policy Unit to continue the work he had begun in England, elaborating a framework for reconstructing South African education. Although his critical faculties were not always appreciated, his loyalty to the movement and now to the ANC government knew no limits. Indeed, it might be said that it was his dedication that killed him on his 70th birthday as he was putting together what would be his last report for government. Although it is daunting to revisit his legacy, it must begin and what better time than now to assess the fate of his ideals for a new South Africa -- ten years after the inauguration of the Government of National Unity. Others have paid tribute to Wolpe the man³ -- his life and his influence -- I will pay tribute to him by dwelling on his texts, on his scholarly oeuvre. Just as he took the texts of others seriously – often more seriously than the authors themselves – so I will try to return the compliment. I will examine his texts not for their own sake, and not only to hold up Wolpe as an exemplary theorist, but also to demonstrate their contemporary relevance. Here too I am trying to be true to Wolpe's insistence that theoretical work be directed to ongoing political projects.

I will set out on this journey from Wolpe's 1985 statement of the relation between intellectuals and politics, interrogating three propositions: (1) that social research should take as its point of departure the priority of the liberation movement, (2) that the study of

³ See, Saleem Badat, "Harold Wolpe: Reminiscences and Reflections." Keynote Address at the launch of the Harold Wolpe Memorial Trust, Spier Auditorium, Stellenbosch, 31 March 1997; Dan O'Meara, "The Engaged Intellectual and the Struggle for a Democratic South Africa: The Life and Work of Harold Wolpe." Address to Inaugural Conference of the Harold Wolpe Memorial Trust, University of Western Cape, 1-2 April, 1997; Jakes Gerwel, "Inaugural Memorial Lecture," Harold Wolpe Memorial Trust, Old Assembly Hall at Parliament, Cape Town, September, 2002.

social consciousness should be left to political organs, and (3) the equivalent position of politically committed intellectuals under liberation as opposed to reconstruction. I shall examine the first two propositions in relation to Wolpe's own "theoretical practice," first in England and then back in South Africa. This will give me the basis for assessing his third proposition -- the political equivalence of liberation struggle and national reconstruction. I will argue that Wolpe was groping toward an alternative vision of the intellectual as interpreter rather than legislator -- a vision that I will try to elaborate in the concluding part of the paper. In short, my intent is to revise Wolpe's 1985 praxis statement in the light of his own work and life.

I: Theory And Practice, 1985

The 1985 praxis statement was originally given at a memorial conference to celebrate the intellectual and political work of Ruth First.⁴ Brief though it was, the 1985 praxis statement was probably Wolpe's most controversial statement, and that is saying something since almost everything he wrote was controversial. Its rhetorical style followed a pattern that was the hallmark of Wolpe's writings, namely to play off two dialectically opposed alternatives, letting each reveal the limitation of the other with respect to some fundamental issue. He would then, like an eagle, soar above the fray with a third position that transcended the difficulties that beset the first two. It was akin to Hegel's thesis-antithesis-synthesis, with the one important difference -- Wolpe presented the final synthesis as an unequivocal rejection of both thesis and the antithesis! There were no redeeming virtues to thesis and antithesis, so that "breaking" with them was a

⁴ Harold Wolpe, "The Liberation Struggle and Research," *Review of African Political Economy*, 32 (April, 1985): 72-78. I will refer to this as Wolpe's 1985 praxis statement.

necessary condition for arriving at the correct perspective. His logic of argumentation put his adversaries on the defensive, since there was no space for reconciliation. As a result the originality of his work could be easily misunderstood and its brilliance could get lost. Nowhere is this truer than with his praxis statement of 1985. Let me discuss each of its three principles in turn.

Principle I: Starting with the Priorities of the Liberation Movement

Wolpe begins by saying that the relation of intellectuals to politics has been misconceived in two mutually opposed ways. In the first the intellectual provides materials and justifications of already defined policies, reducing research to an ideological function. The intellectual becomes an *instrument of power*. This is as unacceptable as the second position, which is a reaction to the first, and defends the unqualified *autonomy of intellectual work*, held to be ethically and politically neutral, or, as it is said, value free. The latter has a more sophisticated variant that recognizes the political relevance of research but that the actual priorities emerge from the logic of the research process itself rather than political goals. Wolpe, by contrast, claims that politics both within and outside science, whether recognized or not, impose themselves on the priorities of the researcher to make nonsense of any claims to autonomy. And so Wolpe argues the simple opposition of intellectual-as-instrument and intellectual-as-autonomous has to be transcended

In their place he substitutes the following principle, derived from his experience in Mozambique with *Frelimo*:

In this sense, the priorities defined at the political level became also the priorities of social research. But, and this is the fundamental point which

cannot be overemphasized, not as conclusions but as starting points for investigation.⁵

The priority from which his South African research embarks is “winning state power,” leading Wolpe to examine the relation between racism and capitalism and, as we shall see, questioning the South African Communist Party’s theory of internal colonialism. The same point of departure led him to examine the nature of the South African state and to question the SACP’s characterization of fascism. Starting from the SACP’s assumption of a unified African opposition to apartheid, Wolpe examined the class composition of racial groups and identified those African classes or class fractions with a potential interest in rather than against apartheid. Thus, starting from the liberation movement’s goal of winning state power, led him to question many of its claims and assumptions

One does not have to look far to discover the source of controversy! Obviously, for some, adopting the priorities of the liberation movement was the prostitution and denaturing of science, while others emphasized the plurality of goals within the liberation movement, and opposed their definition by either the ANC or the SACP. Both these criticisms folded Wolpe back into his “ideological function,” labeling him a servant of power – a party functionary. On the other hand, the liberation movement, and particularly the SACP and ANC, were not too happy with some of the conclusions Wolpe reached, especially when those conclusions questioned their strategy.

He had offended everyone, it seemed, when in practice he had put forward a very interesting position, very different, for example, from Gramsci’s distinction between traditional and organic intellectuals, and yet curiously compatible with Weber’s separation of science and politics. It was a position that was very influenced by the

⁵ Ibid., p.75.

notion of “theoretical practice,” which was Althusser’s attempt to rescue some (relative!) autonomy for the intellectuals in the French Communist Party during the era of post-Stalinist thaw, new social movements, and Eurocommunism. Like Althusser Wolpe wanted to create a space for independent theorizing within the framework of liberation, and like Althusser attracted detractors and enemies on all sides.

Principle II: Leaving Consciousness to the Movement Organizations

This first principle led him to the second principle. In taking the priorities of the liberation movement as point of departure, the role of research is to establish “the structure of the period and of the conjuncture” in order to help in “the formulation of viable strategies and the calculation of possibilities.”⁶ For Wolpe this means replacing general histories in favor of histories that demonstrably contribute to an “analysis upon which strategies are or should be based.”⁷ To Wolpe too many studies of South Africa appeared to be aimless history, unrelated to the present conjuncture. This was emphatically not a dismissal of historical work *tout court* but rather, as he will show in his own research, the endorsement of history that sheds light on the meaning and possibilities within the present.

More controversially, he goes on to argue that the then fashionable study of consciousness should be left to the organs of the liberation movement. This is his second principle.

In my view the acquisition of knowledge of the ‘consciousness’ and propensity to struggle of individuals is a political not an academic research

⁶ Ibid., p.77

⁷ Ibid., p.76.

function. It depends above all upon the links between organisation and masses and is the fundamental condition for successful struggle.⁸

Here, then, is the division of labor, the scientist analyzes the “concrete structural conditions” that underlie “the myriad individual acts of persons, parties, organizations and governments”⁹ and that set the limits of the possible, while the political organization tries to shape consciousness. One is reminded of Marx’s 1859 Preface where he distinguishes between the transformation of economic structures that can be determined with the precision of science and the ideological forms in which men become conscious of conflicts and fight them out.¹⁰ Or, as Marx famously said in his analysis of the French political conjuncture between 1848 and 1852, “Men make history but not under conditions of their own choosing.” Scientists map out the possibilities of social transformation by the study of conditions whereas parties, trade unions, social movements do or do not realize those possibilities.

While Wolpe does not spell this out, he is saying that social analysis should not be monopolized either by the scientist or by the party, but that each has its own sphere of expertise. So he is criticizing “interpreters” who would reduce the social formation to consciousness (without recognizing its underlying structural determinants), but, more interestingly, he is also distancing himself from those who would monopolize knowledge of structure and consciousness, who stand outside history in order to reduce it to the

⁸ Ibid., p.76

⁹ Ibid., p.77

¹⁰ “In studying such transformations [social revolutions] it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic — in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production.” Karl Marx, Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*.

interaction of structure and agency. This loses sight of the central goal which is to transform rather than simply understand the world. On the other hand, he is firmly opposed to giving the party a monopoly of knowledge. Its commitment to organizing gives it insight into consciousness but by the same token its political involvement obstructs its grasp of the totality of social relations and, thus, what makes political sense, which requires a more autonomous “theoretical practice.”

As we shall see Wolpe is no less true to this second methodological principle as he is to the first. In all his writings he tries to tease out the structural limits of possibility. For example, where others would dismiss the reforms of apartheid as cosmetic -- whether it be the pouring of corporate resources into education, the registration of trade unions, or the creation of Bantustans -- Wolpe always focused on the new openings, new possibilities for contestation that they created. He proposed to the liberation movement that it simultaneously recognize the limits and the possibilities of reform.

At the same time it is hard to find an analysis of consciousness in any of his writings. Whether that is a sustainable position is something we shall have cause to examine. For now it might help to distinguish between on the one hand, “*lived experience*,” which is the refractory effect of participation in economic and political structures, and on the other hand “*consciousness*,” which is the more malleable “common sense” that grows out of lived experience but is not determined by it. Thus, the African petit bourgeoisie’s experience of its class position may be racialised but that experience could be compatible with a consciousness that supports liberation or apartheid. Although Wolpe never makes this distinction I think it is present in his writings and that he does examine lived experience as the foundation of consciousness.

Still, we cannot leave this matter without asking why and under what conditions knowledge of consciousness “derives directly from political organisation”? Does the political organisation always have privileged insight into consciousness? For example, if the organizations are in exile or underground, can they shape consciousness, can they even know about the consciousness of the people they claim to lead? It raises the question of which, if any, political organizations have an understanding of consciousness! And finally, there is the Gramscian question: is there no space for the scientific analysis of the formation of consciousness that might give succor to a political organization?¹¹

As I said one of the virtues of Wolpe’s writings is their self-consistency. He is astoundingly true to his own methodological principle of focusing on structural conditions at the expense of consciousness. I don’t believe it was only a function of his being in exile since he stuck to the same principle when he returned to South Africa in 1991! It was a deeply held conviction that came from his involvement in the liberation movement and his reading of Marxism through French structuralism. We need to suspend judgment and examine how far it advanced the understanding of South Africa, and of the limits and possibilities of regime transformation.

Principle III: The Equivalence of Liberation and Reconstruction

Finally, we come to the third proposition, which is not actually a principle because it is more implicit than explicit. It is **the equivalence – from the point of view**

¹¹ As he reflected from prison on the failure of the Italian factory council movement and of revolution in the West more generally, Gramsci focused on the role of civil society in absorbing revolutionary impetus, which in turn led him to analyze politics in terms of a struggle for hegemony and the development of class consciousness. I believe Wolpe was following a similar trajectory and in his last articles he too was groping toward a study of hegemony in South African society. I return to this question in the last two sections of this paper.

of the relation between intellectuals and politics – of liberation and reconstruction, the world of apartheid and the world of postapartheid. In examining the relation between politics and research, Wolpe does not distinguish the postcolonial situation in Mozambique where he worked for a time at Maputo's Centre for African Studies – until the South African police terrorized the researchers and killed Ruth First in 1982 -- from research for the National Liberation Movement. No less than in the liberation struggle, the relation to Frelimo as the ruling party of Mozambique was one in which the intellectual took the priorities of the party as point of departure and focused on the structural conditions for their realization.

Wolpe sees his two principles as guiding the relation of politics to research in all contexts. Destroying the old regime is equivalent to building a new one -- in the former the party-in-opposition defines priorities and organizes consciousness while in the latter the party-in-power sets the reconstruction agenda and organizes a new hegemony. The intellectual takes as point of departure party priorities or reconstruction agenda. From what I can glean of Wolpe's experience at the Education Policy Unit at the University of Western Cape that is exactly what he did.¹² With consummate dedication he applied national priorities to the reconstruction of higher education, exploring problems, such as the tension between equity and development, short term and long term transformation, that were left obscure in official programs.

Toward the end of his life, however, Wolpe began to have second thoughts about his 1985 principles. In the light of his experience in the New South Africa, he began to question his involvement in policy research and to extend his role to critic of the new

¹² While I spent a lot of time with Harold Wolpe in London that was not the case in South Africa. The last time I met him was in Cape Town on July 5th 1990, when he had just come back to South Africa for the first time since his escape.

regime. Instead of taking national priorities as given he began to question them.

Although Wolpe never took the next step, it followed directly from the first – that the formation and investigation of consciousness could not be left to the ANC or SACP but intellectuals had an important contribution to make in an independent public role. They too should foster, elaborate and engage with popular consciousness as part of or in addition to their scientific work. Wolpe never took on this role as public sociologist or “interpreter,” though many others had.

Just as Marx left this world as he was about to embark on the theory of class, so Wolpe left us with tantalizing hints as to where his theorizing was heading. Just as Marxists took off in many different directions from Marx’s abbreviated remarks about class, so there are many ways to take Wolpe’s last testament forward. Reconstructing Wolpe’s vision for today’s world – South Africa and beyond – is not, however, a license to create any research program in his name. Rather any such program requires, as a first step, the careful interrogation of his work, first in exile and then in South Africa. This is what I attempt in the next two parts of this paper, they being a necessary precursor to the research agenda I lay out in the fourth part of the paper. In the fifth and final part I return one last time to assess the relevance of the 1985 praxis statement to contemporary South Africa.

II: Liberation: Modes of Production, the State, and Class Analysis

We begin with Wolpe’s classic paper, “Capitalism and Cheap Labor-Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid,” which helped to transform our understanding of

South Africa.¹³ Here he takes issue with two literatures: on the one hand the literature of the South African Communist Party with its internal colonial model and the more conventional sociological literature that saw South Africa as a plural society held together by coercion. Paradoxically both assess South Africa in a similar way, namely as a society in which racial divisions – the domination of white over black -- trump all others. The SACP defined South Africa as an archaic colonial superstructure fettering the spontaneous development of capitalism. This gave political priority to the National Liberation struggle that would mobilize Africans against apartheid, and either immediately or in a second stage, bring South African capitalism down with it.¹⁴

Wolpe develops a more contingent understanding of the relation between racism and capitalism, insisting that apartheid was not simply the deepening of segregation but reflected the transformation of the underlying economic order. But here again he locates himself against two opposed alternatives: his economic turn dwelt neither on the racial division of labor nor on the distinction between forced and free labor,¹⁵ but on the articulation of capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production. He brought to life this rather arcane conceptualization by showing how it could be used to describe the specificity of the South African racial order. It proved to be Wolpe's most significant contribution to the theory of racism as well as the analysis of South Africa.

¹³ "Capitalism and cheap labour-power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid." *Economy and Society* 1(4) (1972): 425-56. It should be emphasized that Wolpe's theorizing of South Africa was very dependent on the work of historians, such as Colin Bundy and Martin Leggasick. He was regular participant in Shula Marks's London seminar on the history of South Africa.

¹⁴ Wolpe takes on the Internal Colonial model or "colonialism of a special type," in "The theory of internal colonialism: the South African case." Pp.229-252 in Ivan Oxaal, Toney Barnett, and David Booth, editors, *Beyond the Sociology of Development* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).

¹⁵ For the former see Jack and Ray Simons, *Class and Color in South Africa, 1850-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), for the latter see John Rex, *Race, Class and Colonialism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).

The African redistributive mode of production, based on kinship, cattle and tilling the land subsidized the reproduction of labor power, so that capitalists, especially mining capital, could pay their workers a wage that corresponded to little more than what was necessary to maintain a single worker. The wage did not have to support children, elderly, disabled, women so long as the reserves – 13% of the land area into which Africans were herded in accordance with the 1913 Natives Land Act -- did indeed provide a subsistence existence. This was the period of *Segregation* when the state's function was to maintain the circulatory flow of African migrant labor between town and country, by protecting the reserves from white expropriation on the one hand and by making it difficult for African to settle permanently in urban areas on the other.

Segregation prevailed, Wolpe claims, from 1870 to the 1930s whereupon population pressure, soil erosion, and the concentration of land ownership began to undermine the reproductive role of the reserves. Rural impoverishment led to urban impoverishment, especially affecting workers in the expanding manufacturing sector, leading to intensified class struggles in the 1940s, and creating a deep crisis for the political regime. A new mechanism for producing cheap labor had to be found: either the racial order (with its color bars, limited education for blacks, migrant labor system, etc.) would be modified to allow Africans to take over positions monopolized by the white labor aristocracy or the latter -- by combining with Afrikaner farmers -- would shore up the racial order with intensified repression. The latter solution -- *Apartheid* – won the day and cheap African labor was perpetuated not through the reproduction of pre-capitalist modes of production but through an elaborate political and ideological edifice that outlawed African organizations, regulated urban residence, and turned the reserves into

dependent homelands, or, as they were officially called, Bantustans -- satrapies for a small African elite.

“Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa” became a foundation stone for a new research program into the study of South Africa, the extent of which I cannot explore here. Rather I will follow the logic of Wolpe’s own contribution.

Focusing on the mechanisms of the reproduction of cheap labor turned his attention to the state. In the original formulation, the state was a mere reflection of the need for cheap labor. It did what it had to do – maintain cheap labor power – because that was its function! But how was it that the state so effectively and seemingly miraculously always managed to create the conditions for the reproduction of cheap labor power? How was it that it understood what to do and had the capacity to do it? Was this animal acting of its own accord or at the behest of a master? The knee jerk response of Marxism has always been that the state is an instrument of the capitalist class. And indeed such crude views were often found in the SACP literature wherein the South Africa state was regarded as a species of fascism created by and for a unified capitalist class. But that assumed away the problem. How was it that out of individual competing capitalists sprung a coordinated ruling class that magically comprehended and enforced its common interests?

This was the point of departure for a group of Marxists -- known as the gang of four -- influenced by one of the icons of Marxist structuralism, Nicos Poulantzas.¹⁶ They argued, following Poulantzas, that the dominant class in capitalist society was made up of class fractions (mining capital, manufacturing capital, land owners, merchant capital, etc.

¹⁶ Rob Davies, David Kaplan, Mike Morris, and Dan O’Meara, “Class Struggles and the Periodisation of the State in South Africa.” *Review of African political Economy* 3(7) (1976): 4-30. Nicos Poulantzas shifted his analysis quite considerably, but it was *Political Power and Social Classes* (London: New Left Books, 1973) that influenced Davies et al. while Wolpe would turn to his later book, *State, Power Socialism* (London, New Left Books, 1978) for a very different view of the state.

in the case of South Africa) that become organized into a “power bloc” in which one fraction – the hegemonic fraction -- comes to represent the interests of all. In a series of essays and books the Poulantzians periodized South Africa capitalism as a succession of different power blocs, handing the initiative for change to forces within the dominant class. While not discounting this approach altogether Wolpe took them to task for neglecting the fundamental contradiction between capital and labor but also for continuing with an “instrumentalist” view of the state.¹⁷ Although it was a major advance to break up the dominant class into its different fractions, still it was the hegemonic fraction that wielded the state in the general interest of capitalism. In identifying the hegemonic fraction by the policies the state pursued the Poulantzians assumed precisely what had to be demonstrated, namely that the state was indeed an instrument of some hegemonic fraction.

The trouble with the instrumentalist view of the state, Wolpe argued, is that when it is not tautological it too often lapses into its opposite. That is to say instrumentalists tend to work back from some given policy, say pass laws and influx control, to the fraction of capital that benefits, say mining capital, and concludes that the state is the instrument of mining capital without ever showing that mining capital was indeed the force behind the legislation. Alternatively, when the state does something in opposition to the supposedly reigning fraction of capital, e.g. when color bars are introduced against the will of mining capital, then the instrumentalist position has to be given up for one that stresses the autonomy or potential autonomy of the state. From being an instrument of the hegemonic fraction it suddenly becomes a subject with a will of its own!

¹⁷ See Wolpe, “Towards an Analysis of the South African State.” *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 8(4) (1980): 399-421; “The Analysis of the South African State.” Paper presented to Conference on “Southern African Studies: Retrospect and Prospect, 30 May – 1 June, 1983.

Here then, once again, Wolpe constructs a debate between two opposed perspectives: the state as an object (instrument) and the state as subject (autonomy). Both suffer from the assumption that the state is a unified organ whereas it is made up of contradictory apparatuses between which, within which, and over which there is much contestation. The two opposed perspectives cancel each other out and Wolpe comes away with his preferred theory: the state is a *contradictory unity*, neither subject nor object but a terrain of struggle. The structure of the state, therefore, shapes not only internal struggles on its own terrain but also influences external struggles in civil society. Wolpe refocuses the debate onto the nature of the state, viewed not as an external object to be conquered, but as having a specific structure with specific effects.

This is all very abstract but Wolpe tries to make it concrete in his book, *Race, Class and the Apartheid State*.¹⁸ Its major thesis is that the state creates opportunities and sets limits on struggles both on its own terrain, especially within and among the judiciary, the legislature, executive, and military, as well as outside the state in civil society and the workplace. Just as Wolpe's earlier work highlighted the discontinuity between segregation and apartheid on the basis of economic change, so now he seeks to distinguish 3 periods *within the era of apartheid* on the basis of forms of state and their effects on patterns of struggle.

--In the first period, 1948-1960, the judiciary, although nominally independent, became increasingly subordinated to the executive through parliamentary edicts. Even though spaces for political action were increasingly restricted, mass struggles nevertheless continued to expand, culminating in the Sharpeville massacre of 1960.

¹⁸ *Race, Class and the Apartheid State* (London: James Currey and Paris: Unesco, 1988).

--The second period from 1960 to 1973 saw the abandonment of even the pretense of the rule of law, and the extra-parliamentary political terrain was systematically destroyed, organizations were banned and activists imprisoned. The liberation movements went underground and turned to armed struggle. The state responded with declarations of emergency, enhancing its police powers and closing down virtually all possibilities of reform.

--The third period, which Wolpe calls the “rise of insurrectionary struggles,” begins in 1973 with the Durban strikes, and the Black Consciousness Movement in communities and schools. How are we to explain these new developments? Certainly, as Wolpe claims, the state is not weaker. If anything it has become substantially stronger: the government arrogated greater power both to itself as well as to the military and security forces. Along with the militarization came a series of reforms – recognition of trade unions, representative bodies in urban areas, greater autonomy for Bantustans, tricameral legislature. While many maintained that these reforms were a facade, Wolpe insisted that they opened spaces for the mass democratic movement, that was also being fueled by changes in the economy.

Let me recapitulate so as to better appreciate what Wolpe is up to. If his first contribution was to identify the economic structure that underlay apartheid, that is, the *(re)articulation of modes of production*, and if his second contribution was to foreground the changing *form of state* that is always creating new political possibilities as it sustains (or not) that articulation of modes of production, then the third contribution, to which we come to now, was his analysis of *class formation*, viewed as the combined effect of economic and political structures. Thus, in the analysis of the third period Wolpe focuses

on the way the economy restructures the relation between class and race. The concentration and increasing capital intensity of industry called for skilled blacks who moved into positions vacated by outwardly mobile whites. As compared to the migrant workers, these “urban insiders” were better educated and had deeper routes in the city, which therefore meant increased *class capacity* of the most unambiguous opponents of apartheid. At the same time economic changes reconfigured *class interests* within the white society. Unprecedented growth in manufacturing and service sectors overtook mining, so that ever larger fractions of capital depended on a wider and more stable labor force that would not only produce more but also consume on a bigger scale! As capital’s opposition to apartheid stiffened, so support for apartheid from white workers and the white petit bourgeoisie also waned. They were displaced by a black petit bourgeoisie, growing in the towns, and the consolidation of a black “bureaucratic bourgeoisie” in the Bantustans. Wolpe warned, however, that these classes – the black petit bourgeoisie in the cities and bureaucratic bourgeoisie of the Bantustans -- also had a growing interest in apartheid’s racial segregation of consumer markets and administrative apparatuses.¹⁹

So how did Wolpe see the future of South Africa in February 1987, when he was finishing *Race, Class and the Apartheid State*? This is how he assessed the conjuncture then. As the social forces around apartheid were refashioned, and popular struggles

¹⁹ This class analysis can be found in *Race, Class and the Apartheid State* but its foundations lies in two superb articles -- one on the white working class and the other on the African Petit-Bourgeoisie. In the first he cuts through much confusion by first determining white workers’ exact locations in relation to the means of production and then, and only then, considering the effects of political structures. In the second paper Wolpe again gives priority to relations of production in distinguishing between new and old African petit bourgeoisie in both urban and rural areas where political structures are so different. He admonished Joe Slovo for prematurely subsuming the interests of the African petit bourgeoisie under Africans in general. Where the SACP gave primacy to the racial divide, Wolpe still insists on putting class first. Again Wolpe was not making a definitive claim about the consciousness of African petit bourgeoisie but directing the SACP to a possibility it should examine and take into account! See, “The ‘white working class’ in South Africa.” *Economy and Society* 5(2) (May 1976): 197-240; and “The Changing Class Structure of South Africa: The African Petit-Bourgeoisie.” Pp.143-74 in P. Zarembka (ed.), *Research in Political Economy*, 2 (1978).

intensified, so the state adopted a dual strategy of repression and reform. Intended to contain opposition, the effect was the opposite, namely to galvanize struggles and, thereby, open up new political spaces. South Africa soon faced an unstable balance of power, an organic crisis if you will. The state simply no longer had the capacity to destroy the extra-parliamentary terrain as it had done in the 1960s – it faced greater opposition not only within its own territory but also in the Southern African region as a whole and internationally. A military solution was out of the question. So what of a negotiated compromise? This too seemed unlikely. Although there was pressure from the U.S. and Britain, and from large scale capital for “constructive engagement,” for the apartheid regime to concede majority rule would be tantamount to political suicide. From the side of the liberation movement a negotiated settlement seemed equally unlikely because its military weakness would limit its bargaining power and the reforms, therefore, would be too limited to be acceptable.

What is common to mass democratic opposition is the demand for dismantling of apartheid and the establishment of a unitary democratic political system based on one person one vote, together with some degree of redistribution of the economic resources as outlined in the Freedom Charter. What is involved, *as a minimum*, over and above the political demands is: (a) the dismantling of the giant corporations which now exercise decisive power over all sectors of South African economy, in order to ensure that a non-racial democratic regime can exercise a degree of control over the major economic resources in agriculture, industry, mining and finance; (b) the rapid removal of the extreme inequalities in access to land through its radical redistribution and (c) the massive redistribution of resources in education, welfare, housing, health and so forth in favor of the black people, which even a reformed capitalism would be unable to undertake. It is implicit that the transformation of South African society in this direction depends pre-eminently on the development of structures of “peoples’ power” based on the working class and the full involvement of the democratic trade unions and the mass organisations of the people.²⁰ (Italics added.)

²⁰Race, Class and the Apartheid State, 104-5

How was it that 4 years later both government and opposition were prepared to compromise their supposed interests and enter a negotiated settlement? Wherein lies his mistaken conclusion? Let us go over his argument.

Wolpe starts out with the analysis of the SACP and the ANC, their view of South Africa as colonialism of a special type, that is the superimposition of an advanced white society over an exploited and dominated black society. Through a series of articles culminating in *Race, Class and the Apartheid State* he interrogates this view of the primacy of racial divisions, focusing the subterranean shifts in class alignments within each race that transformed their interests in the apartheid order. He did not have the courage of his class convictions, however, and could not imagine separating the socialist project from the national bourgeois project. At most he saw this as a clash of short term and long terms interests so that that the National Democratic Revolution would be the first stage and the socialist revolution the second stage. He didn't see what Frantz Fanon saw: two very different, opposed projects that existed side by side, that vied with each other within the decolonization struggle. If the national bourgeois road were taken then, according to Fanon, hopes for a socialist road would be ground to zero.

Why did Wolpe remain with a united front strategy, when his analysis was pointing to divergent interests? Was it that he simply wished to preserve the unity of the liberation movement? Or did he indeed believe that the consciousness, emerging on the basis of the lived experience of class, could be shaped by the ANC and SACP, even though the leadership was underground, in exile or in prison?²¹ Did he believe the unity claims of the organs of mass mobilization? Or did he see the claims of the leadership as a

²¹ Interestingly, the two Marxists who were especially aware of questions of consciousness -- Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963) and Antonio Gramsci's *The Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971) -- never appear in Wolpe's texts.

product of their structural circumstances, and of the need to deny internal divisions? As a theoretician who takes the priorities of the movement as point of departure, Wolpe must have recognized that the ideology of the dominant classes as well as those of the subordinate classes are themselves objective conditions that set limits on subjective possibilities. They need to be studied! Nor is it simply a matter of reading ideology off from class position. Class interests and class consciousness are shaped by a variety of organizations in civil society, including but not exclusively those of the liberation movement, as well as by the sedimentations of earlier struggles. This is no argument for studying ideology on its own, just as it is no warrant for leaving it in the hands of the liberation movement.

Wolpe has amply demonstrated that one can get quite far with structural analysis, but it nevertheless faces its own barriers when it stops short of the examination of the lived experience held by the participants, whether of the dominant or subordinate classes.²² To be fair to Wolpe, consciousness can change quite rapidly with the conjuncture and it is more than likely that no amount of studies of lived experience would have anticipated the clandestine move toward a negotiated transition. But it is nonetheless important to understand the ideological content of opposition to apartheid to assess its likely trajectory in postapartheid South Africa.

In studies of lived experience that have been undertaken there is not much evidence of socialist consciousness. Take Karl von Holdt's, *Transition from Below* an

²² Wolpe is in good company. After the English working class, which had been enfranchised in 1867, voted disproportionately for the Tories, Engels wrote to Marx: "What do you say to the elections in the factory districts? Once again the proletariat has discredited itself terribly" [Cited in McKenzie and Silver, *Angels in Marble* (London: Heinemann 1968: 14)]. They too got carried away with theory. It was Marxist social historians Edward Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm who made sense of English working class consciousness during the 19th. century. They were Marxists who didn't believe that the study of consciousness is best left to any party!

ethnography of worker opposition to apartheid at Highveld Steel.²³ First, the struggles he recounts are unequivocally against the racial despotism of the apartheid workplace regime, struggles to improve wages and working conditions, and to remove racism from relations between workers and management. Von Holdt also found that the working class was itself divided into two opposed groups: migrant workers who lived in hostels and the more urbanized workers who lived in the township. Migrant workers organized themselves into strike committees whose militance clashed with the more cautious trade unionism of the shops stewards. The divisions ran deep but neither side paid much attention to the radical redistribution of resources, and much less to the socialist transformation of property relations.

They may not be Fanon's most "pampered" and "privileged" section of the colonized population, yet still it is more than likely working class radicalism was tamed by how much they had to lose. Militant though they may have been, their political demands were limited to deracialization and majority rule. Similarly, Gay Seidman's comparison of workers' movements in Brazil and South Africa, while drawing attention to the convergence of community and labor struggles, portrays class consciousness as a collective identity defined by the common enemy -- apartheid.²⁴ It did not extend to the demands of the Freedom Charter, which might have had more appeal to a dispossessed peasantry. But the ANC relegated the land and peasant question to a secondary concern.

²³ Karl von Holdt, *Transition From Below: Forging Trade Unionism and Workplace Change in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2003).

²⁴ Gay Seidman, *Manufacturing Militance: Workers' Movements in Brazil and South Africa, 1970-1985* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

III: Reconstruction: Education For A New South Africa

Race, Class and the Apartheid State is not an easy read. It is a series of rather dense arguments whose significance might be lost on anyone not steeped in Marxist theory. It is an extensive preparation for a major mountaineering expedition that ends up as a walk in the foothills. His claims about the periodisation of the state and the balance of class forces are suggestive but unelaborated. We need to turn to his parallel work on South African education to discover where the theoretical expedition was taking him.

Research on Education in South Africa

Already in 1985 Wolpe had begun to work on a project called, *Research on Education in South Africa* (RESA) that would later turn into the research he did at the University of Western Cape. From the beginning it was a collaborative project, focused on education for a postapartheid South Africa. Papers began to appear in 1988, trying to understand the context and consequences of the Soweto School Uprising of 1976.²⁵ Of the causes of the uprising Wolpe had a number of things to say. First, he documented the development of Bantu education, in particular the rapid expansion of secondary education in the 1960s, designed to win over politically large sections of the African population and at the same time provide for industry's ever expanding need for skilled workers. Neither the ideological nor the training function proved very effective. In explaining the rebellion in schools – and there had been fermentation on a less dramatic scale for a number of years all over South Africa – Wolpe simply said that all other arenas of extra-

²⁵ *Strategies on Education and training in South Africa, 1960-1987: The Role of Corporate Capital* (RESA, Paper 1, 1988); *Bantu Education as a Reformist Strategy of the South African State* (RESA Paper 2, 1988); *The Struggle Against Apartheid Education: Towards People's Education in South Africa* (RESA Paper 3, 1988), *Three Theses on People's Education* (RESA, Paper 5, 1990)

parliamentary struggle had been closed down and schools were the only arena left within which political discussion and oppositional ideology could develop. The precipitating factor in the Soweto uprising was, of course, the imposition of instruction in Afrikaans language, but the groundwork for the uprising had been laid long before.

With his eye on the future Wolpe focused on the possibilities created by the struggles within education. Once again, he takes a stance between two opposed positions, parallel to the stance he took with respect to theories of the state -- rejecting both the view of the education as subject with full autonomy and education as object with no autonomy. That is, he opposed the position that holds education to be a panacea that will solve South Africa's problems -- a view held by well-meaning liberals and by corporations who poured money into the reform of education. On the other hand, he also opposed the Marxist view that education merely reflects and reproduces the inequalities of class and racial orders -- a view held by those who would subordinate the struggles in education to those of the liberation movement as a whole. According to this view schools should be boycotted under the mantra "Liberation first, education later!" Wolpe, by contrast argued that education is a contradictory terrain and its relation to the existing order is contingent on the balance of forces. Against both boycott and reform he defends the ongoing struggle for "people's education" -- a schooling that would eliminate ignorance and illiteracy, cultivate an understanding of apartheid and all its oppressions and inequalities, that would counter competitive individualism with collective organization, that would equip people with the capacity to realize their potential. People's education did not have to wait for the end of apartheid but could begin now by connecting, but not subordinating itself to the liberation movement.

People's education was very different than the proposals of the government and corporations which were concerned only with upgrading skills. As the negotiated transition was looming Wolpe feared, however, that servicing the economy with skilled personnel would take precedence over education's role in the transformation of society.

Preoccupation with the question of the provision of education and skilling which fails to link this, on the one hand, with a programme of people's education and, on the other hand, with the question of restructuring of the social and institutional order, threatens to allow education to be edged towards performing a predominantly reproductive rather than transformative role.²⁶ Needless to say his premonitions were on the mark, as he would discover when he returned to South Africa in 1991.

Before turning to his work at EPU it is important to note not only the parallels with his theorizing of the state, but also the shift in Wolpe's perspective on the postapartheid transition and the priorities of the liberation movement. In his praxis piece of 1985 he wrote that the "fundamental objective of political struggle is the winning of state power," but the meaning of "winning state power" was not interrogated. In his writings on the state he spoke of the appearance/dissolution of the extra-parliamentary terrain. Civil society, if it appeared at all, was the crucible of class forces rather than the locus of prefigurative politics. Implicitly, he adopted the Leninist view of seizing state power, but now in his analysis of schooling he talks of dual power, and the importance of building alternative forms of education as preparatory and critical to the transition to a democratic South Africa.

Although he never refers to Antonio Gramsci, he is now making the Gramscian argument for a War of Position that would restructure civil society *before* winning state

²⁶ Harold Wolpe and Elaine Unterhalter, "Reproduction, reform and transformation: the analysis of education in South Africa." In Unterhalter et al. (eds.), *Apartheid Education and Popular Struggles* (London: Zed Books, 1991), p.15.

power, warning against a War of Movement (boycott education and liberation first) or succumbing to a War of Position from above (expansion and reform of education for upgrading the labor force). Once one enters the terrain of civil society, however, it is hard to leave the study of “consciousness” to the party! It calls for an altogether different type of intellectual, an interpreter rather than a legislator, an issue to which I will return in the conclusion of this paper. What is important for the purposes of my argument here is that these writings at RESA validated struggles outside the state, and in that sense very different from the policy work he will undertake once he returns to South Africa -- research that will be on the terrain of the state.

Education Policy Unit

When amnesty for members of the opposition was announced for February 1990, and the phone started ringing from South Africa, it was Jakes Gerwel, then Vice-Chancellor and Rector at the University of Western Cape, whose voice was the most insistent, urging Wolpe to take RESA to UWC and there create an Education Policy Unit. Created as a university for coloured students in 1959, as early as 1982 UWC had adopted an oppositional Mission Statement that foregrounded its commitment to the advancement of the Third World communities of Southern Africa. Gerwel’s own inaugural address of 1987, was even more forceful in its defiance of apartheid, declaring UWC “an intellectual home for the left.” Wolpe could have taken a more comfortable position at one of the “historically white universities,” but he chose this beacon of opposition to apartheid.

Reading AnnMarie Wolpe’s *The Long Way Home*, it was not hard for Wolpe to accept Gerwel’s offer. Yet it did immerse him in a bewildering quadruple transition:

transplantation from one continent to another for family as well as himself; second, the transformation of South Africa that he had last seen nearly 30 years ago; third, a shift in intellectual orientation from theorist to practitioner, from engaged and loyal critic of the liberation movement to serving a new government of national reconstruction; and fourth the collapse of the Soviet Union and the movement's corresponding loss of socialist vision. Things were moving quickly and there was little time to adjust. He had to set up a new center in a new country with mainly new collaborators and delve into new projects.

Reading the papers that came out of the EPU one sees Wolpe, not surprisingly, struggling in his new role. The transition itself was real enough and peaceful – although violence continued in the townships and fortresses were built in the suburbs -- and these surely were blessings, but by the same token the institutions of yesterday had a powerful inertia. He set about defining the parameters of higher education in the new democratic dispensation. Without an overall development plan there could be no reconstruction of higher education. There was a danger that the apartheid system of higher education would dissolve into its many parts, with many harmful effects, not least a deepening divide between the historically white universities (HWUs) and the historically black universities (HBUs), throwing up huge barriers to mobility between them. He wrestled with the tension between education for economic development and education for equity, insisting that neither side of the scales could be overloaded. In pursuit of short term objectives he feared that the transformative mission of education would be reduced to a footnote.

In his most thorough analysis of the legacies of apartheid he argued against those who claimed that HBUs received as much if not more subsidies than HWUs as well as against those who claimed that the HWUs were in sync with the new South Africa while

the HBUs were distorted creatures of apartheid. Wolpe and his collaborators argued that both branches were the product of apartheid, that both had their distinct functions under apartheid and both, therefore, had to be radically transformed in the new South Africa.²⁷

Even if one accepted the bifurcation of higher education -- with HBUs limited to a vocational function, largely in the arts and humanities while the HWUs had an academic function with faculties of sciences, professional schools and extensive research facilities -- still the deficit between the resources offered and the resources necessary was much greater for the HBUs than for the HWUs, and it was a gap that was increasing as students poured into the HBUs. South Africa was faced with the frightening prospect that higher education was deepening rather than redressing the maldistribution of resources. The obstacles to change were not simply vested interests, backed up by ideology of university autonomy, and built-in features of the apartheid order, such as the remote geographical location of HBUs in areas without an urban or intellectual infrastructure.

Without an overall development plan Wolpe was pessimistic that past injustices could be reversed.²⁸ As early as 1991 he wrote:

My central concern has been to highlight the fact that, in different ways, in the absence of coherent development strategies, there is a strong tendency for *ad hoc* education and training policies to be advanced. A consequence of this is that education and training programmes may contribute only to a highly limited degree to a process of social transformation and, indeed, may serve to help reproduce powerfully entrenched structures generated by apartheid. What is needed is the preparation of democratically reached development strategies and, within these, appropriate policies of education and training.²⁹

²⁷ Badat et al., "Differentiation and Disadvantage: The Historically Black Universities in South Africa." Report to the Desmond Tutu Educational Trust. Education Policy Unit, 1994.

²⁸ See, for example, the following two papers of the EPU that appeared in 1993, Harold Wolpe and Zenariah Barends, "A Perspective on Quality and Inequality in South African University Education," and Saleem Badat, Harold Wolpe, and Zenariah Barends, "The Post-Secondary System: Towards Policy Formulation for Equality and Development."

²⁹ Harold Wolpe, "Education and social transformation: problems and dilemmas." In Elaine Unterhalter, Harold Wolpe, and Thozamile Botha (eds), *Education in a Future South Africa* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1992), p.16.

Perhaps it was the frustration of the absence of a development plan and a feeling of despair that led Wolpe in his last writings to emphasize the critical role of the university. I think Wolpe became less sanguine about the spaces within the postapartheid state, and began looking for spaces in civil society from which to engage the theory and practice of reconstruction. There was a subtle shift of emphasis in his view of education: from the tension between development and equity to the tension between training in technical skills and social transformation.

The difference between the two approaches is that one rests on a technical rationality which leaves unquestioned the extant social relations and, hence, the social purposes of technique; the other puts in question the social relations which are being or are intended to be served by technical knowledge. ... The task of *continuous critique of the social order and of the theoretical issues about continuous social transformation* is a compelling one and consistent with UWCs traditions. It would be fully consonant with this interpretation of UWC's redefined mission to establish, for example, an *Institute for Social Theory*.³⁰ (Italics added)

This was Wolpe's last published statement on the university, you might say it was his last testament. In it he proposed an Institute for Social theory!! If the government can't provide a satisfactory framework of a development strategy for social transformation, a framework in accordance with which higher education can be reorganized, then the university should set up its own centers for critical thinking.³¹

Wolpe had been trying to actualize his first principle, to take the priorities of the Government of National Unity as point of departure and to then interrogate them. He found himself, however, continually being forced back into a more ideological function,

³⁰ Harold Wolpe, "The Debate on University Transformation in South Africa: the case of the University of Western Cape." *Comparative Education* (1995) 31(2): 288-9

³¹ Wolpe added that South African universities should not slavishly seek "international standards" or uncritically adopt the rhetoric of "quality" and "excellence," but do so only within the context of specifically national problems of social transformation. The university has to be responsive to national conditions.

legitimizing policies he wanted to question. If there wasn't space within the state for critical work, Wolpe seemed to be arguing, then it was important to form independent centers of critical theory outside the state. Only from a strong base outside the core institutions of the state could intellectuals be effective in their policy work.

In short, his work in education led him to question just how contradictory the postapartheid state was, or, if it was contradictory, then how difficult it was to exploit, at least, for the forces of social justice. Once more he was insisting on the institutional autonomy of the intellectual. In Essex that autonomy had been assured, now in the New South Africa it would have to be created.

IV: A Wolpean Agenda for The Institute for Social Theory

Wolpe's last testament proposed the establishment of an Institute for Social Theory which would take as point of departure not the priorities of the Government of National Unity but "the continuous critique of the social order." What might be the agenda for Wolpe's Institute for Social Theory (IST) today? To make this reengagement with the life and work of Harold Wolpe an engagement with the pressing issues of our times I propose a research agenda based first, on his accumulated writings and second, on his intellectual trajectory when he died. Obviously, it is my reading of his life and so I present it as only one possible agenda. Others, more familiar with South Africa, will doubtless be critical of my attempt and take the Wolpean agenda in different directions. I only want to begin a discussion.

I will take Wolpe's last theoretical article -- his interrogation of the government's Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) and written in 1995 -- as the founding

document of IST.³² This was his “coming out as a critical theorist,” or rather his return from internal exile, his own long way home. He did not administer his usual theoretical chopping board treatment but his critique was no less devastating.

More significantly, it took a major turn away from the 1985 praxis document, published exactly a decade earlier. If, in the past, his point of departure was the taken-for-granted priorities of the liberation movement and why, therefore, one strategy was more appropriate than another, now he argued that the priorities of the Government of National Unity were elusive and vague so that strategies had become meaningless. The RDP papered over conflicts of interest in civil society between classes and between races, and within the state between different agencies, especially in the light of the sunset clauses that protected white civil servants. The RDP presented a spurious picture of consensus and unity, obscuring contradictory forces and clashing priorities. Indeed, certain priorities had been explicitly removed from the table, in particular socialist property relations. Instead privatization was rearing its head, trumping public ownership. “But what the RDP does not put in issue,” Wolpe writes, “is the question of the continuity of the capitalist system in South Africa.”³³

Taking this as the foundational document would be to carry out “the continuous critique of the social order,” by examining the capitalist nature of postapartheid South Africa and posing the question of socialism. The point of departure, therefore, must be Wolpe’s classic analysis of cheap labor power – reconstructing it with a view to understanding the new mechanisms for the genesis and reproduction of cheap labor power, which leads inevitably to the state, civil society and the formation of classes and

³² “The Uneven Transition from Apartheid in South Africa.” *Transformation* 27 (1995): 88-101.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.100.

class alliances. Thus, it seems appropriate to revisit *Race, Class and the Apartheid State* in the light of the ebb and flow of civil society and social movements under the new democratic dispensation. What follows, then, is my agenda for Wolpe's Institute for Social Theory.

1: Producing Cheap Labor Power

Wolpe's original argument was that under segregation cheap labor power had an economic basis – the homeland economies provided welfare for non-employed family members. As this economic basis for cheap labor power eroded, it was replaced by political mechanisms of apartheid. This argument, however, overlooked new economic foundations of cheap labor and the political conditions of their reproduction.

- *Where is Gender?* Amy Mariotti argued that the influx of women into the apartheid labor force, in manufacturing but especially in service sector and professions, such as teaching and nursing, turned multiple earner families into a new basis for cheap labor power. Still, the apartheid system focused on the employment of black men. Today that is changing. First, the expansion of consumerism increases clerical, service, and retail jobs where women prevail. Second, as the unemployment of men increases, women are forced to become the new breadwinners, the new migrant laborers traveling to urban areas for employment as vendors, domestic workers and sex workers. Xolani Ngonini has argued that the men left behind in the reserves are unable to adapt to the new circumstances, but women, already accustomed to flexible economic strategies already under apartheid, are better equipped to deal with destitution. More generally, how are patterns gender relations and kinship organization imbricated in the manufacture of cheap labor power.³⁴
- *The Expansion of Rural Industrialization.* When Wolpe wrote his cheap labor power paper border industrialization was little more than a paper program. However, in the 1970s and 1980s capital did migrate to the new rural slums created by forced removals from the black spots within agricultural areas. Gillian Hart writes of the textile and steel industries that moved to Kwa-Zulu Natal where they could exploit

³⁴ Amelia Mariotti, *The Incorporation of African Women into Wage Employment in South Africa, 1920-1970* (PhD Dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1980); Xolani Ngonini, "The Impact of Mining Retrenchments on the Survival Strategies and Livelihoods of Rural Homesteads: A Case Study of Two Villages in Mbizana Municipal District, Eastern Cape." (MA Thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 2002).

the dispossessed peasantry. What has been the dynamics of rural industrialization and with what consequences for the African working class?³⁵

- *Global Connections.* When he referred to the erosion of subsistence in the homelands and later Bantustans, Wolpe overlooked the transnational migration of workers from all over Southern Africa (Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique) not just to the mines but to other urban occupations such as domestic work. Today we see an influx of immigrants from all over Africa as South African cities become the regional consumer and industrial Mecca. By the same token, South African mining, manufacturing and retail capital migrates northwards, just as foreign capital – from both West and East – continues to invest in South Africa. How has the lowering of trade barriers dismantled manufacturing, increased unemployment, flooded the market with cheap consumer goods and thus reduced the costs of labor power? More generally, what are the significant patterns of South Africa's incorporation into Southern Africa, the continent of Africa as a whole and the globe with respect to flows of labor and capital?³⁶
- *Privatizing the State.* In Wolpe's account of cheap labor power there was always the unposed question: cheap for whom? It may have been cheap for capital (low wages) but it became increasingly expensive for the apartheid state, which bore the ultimately unbearable burden of regulating the social and geographical mobility of African labor. The apartheid state absorbed the cost of cheap labor. Today, it would seem that the post-apartheid state is shedding that cost by privatizing its public services (water, electricity, housing). It is cutting its subsidies for cheap labor and creating much misery in the process, especially for the mounting numbers of unemployed. By way of reaction, it has set in motion community struggles across the nation. What are the class bases of the struggles outside the state but also within the state over the social wage?³⁷
- *The Non-Reproduction of Labor Power?* In his original article Wolpe assumed that capital has to reproduce labor power, that it is necessary to both maintain laborers on a day to day basis and somehow the labor force has to be renewed inter-generationally. There is ample evidence, however, that capital is not concerned about the reproduction of labor power. African laborers have suffered deplorable and dangerous working conditions in the mines, for example, where they have suffered high rates of accidents. Furthermore, capitalism was indifferent as to whether the Bantustans were subsistence plots or burial grounds. Today, the relative weak response to AIDS suggests that South African capitalism can withstand the decimation of the country's active laboring population. What, then, are the interests

³⁵ Gillian Hart, *Disabling Globalization: Places of Power in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

³⁶ Hart, op.cit.; Darlene Miller, "The Regional Workplace in Post-Apartheid Southern Africa – a case study of Shoprite, a retail multinational." In Webster and Von Holdt (eds.), *Flexible Worlds of Work: Ten Years of Restructuring Post-Apartheid Workplaces* (Durban: University of Natal Press, forthcoming).

³⁷ Ashwin Desai, *We are the Poors: Community Struggles in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002); Patrick Bond, *Unsustainable South Africa* (Durban: University of Natal Press, 2002).

and the capacity of the South African state and South African capital to support the reproduction of its labor force?

2: Extracting Surplus

For Wolpe the success of capital accumulation depends on cheapening labor power. He does not consider the alternative strategy of extracting more surplus from labor whether through working them harder (longer hours, more intensively), or through changing the work process through deskilling and mechanization. Curiously, when he studied the labor process it was always to determine the class position of certain occupations not as a mechanism for increasing exploitation. There is, of course a long century of struggles over job reservation and color bars that protected white labor against cheap African labor. Inasmuch as these have disappeared so one might argue that labor costs fall and production can be rationalized. More generally what has happened to the mechanisms of surplus extraction in post-apartheid South Africa?

- *The Informalization of Work*. Studies at the University of Witwatersrand's Sociology of Work Unit (SWOP), suggest that the erosion of apartheid laws that regulated both occupational and geographical mobility have not always led to a concomitant erosion of the racial division of labor. Thus, for example, color bars may float upwards without disappearing. Moreover, the deregulation of apartheid has coincided with the unfettering of market forces to produce new strategies of flexible work organization. In labor intensive manufacturing industries, such as garments and shoes, there is now a widespread use of outsourcing to small employers and family production. Similarly in agriculture and wine production there has been intensified casualization of labor. Wolpe's articulation of capitalist and precapitalist modes of production becomes a chain of subcontracting that stretches from high end manufacturing to small enterprises to self-employed workers to family production to subsistence production and unemployment. How does this chain develop and how is the working population distributed along it?³⁸

³⁸ Here I am relying on studies conducted at SWOP and elsewhere, gathered together in Webster and Von Holdt, *Flexible Worlds of Work: Ten Years of Restructuring Post-Apartheid Workplaces* (Durban: University of Natal Press, Forthcoming). This was based on a conference held at the famed Lilliesleaf Farm and sponsored by the Wolpe Trust.

- *New Despotism at Work.* We need to distinguish between the reorganization of work – informalization, casualization, outsourcing – and the regulation of production relations. Flexibility in production, competition in the market, and new mechanisms of producing cheap labor power have effectively weakened labor, undercut the power of unions and facilitated the emergence of a new despotism in production. Karl Von Holdt has identified three scenarios for the regulation of the post-apartheid workplace: negotiated compromise, a spontaneous version that he calls wildcat cooperation and a third which seems most prevalent, “authoritarian restoration.” Along the chain of subcontracting from core to periphery, how are forms of production regime distributed? What are the dilemmas of trade unions in this economic context but also the political context of post-apartheid South Africa. ?³⁹
- *Racial Division of Labor.* Wolpe argued that the basis of the racial order lay in the economic structure. What are the contours of the new racial order and how do they reflect the changing labor supplies, and the informalization of work. In what ways does liberal democracy conserve/restore or challenge/dissolve the racial division of labor and racialized property relations?

3: Race, Class and the PostApartheid State

Only once the parameters of the economy have been established can one begin to pose questions of state and class.

- What is the role of the state in reproducing cheap labor power and the extraction surplus value? We need to examine the fractions of the capitalist class – finance, mining, manufacturing, merchant criss-crossed by national and international connections -- that make up its power bloc. What fraction is driving the (dis)accumulation of capital in South Africa today?
- How shall we conceive of the contradictory unity of the postapartheid state? What are the tensions within the state between its various branches? What is the relation between the ruling party and the state? How does the alliance of party, COSATU and SACP organize hegemony over the wider society?
- How do transformation of economy and state combine to shape processes of class formation, including the racial formation of new dominant classes, strategies of black empowerment and the African new and old petty bourgeoisie. How is the working class being recomposed and what is its relation to the marginalized populations? In short what is the new class structure of South Africa today and how does it reproduce a new racial order?

³⁹ Webster and Holdt, “Introduction,” in Webster and Holdt, op.cit. Sakhela Bulhlungu, *Democracy and Modernization in the Making of the South African Trade Union Movement: The Dilemma of Leadership, 1973-2000* (PhD. Dissertation, University of Witwatersrand, 2002).

4: *Alternative Perspectives*

Wolpe read widely but he never made any explicit comparisons with other societies. His style of theorizing driven by the elucidation of concepts in close connection to the concrete was not conducive to inductive or speculative comparative work. But I may be tapping a more general trait of South African scholarship which has been deeply and often brilliantly self-absorbed. If the sin of American sociology is turning the particular into the universal, South Africa suffers from the obverse tendency, turning the universal into the particular! Drawing parallels with other social formations, such as Mahmood Mamdani's effort to show the convergence between political rule in South Africa and the rest of Africa, is often ignored or given a critical reception.⁴⁰ The allergy to comparison is compounded by fears of neo-colonialism or metropolitan domination by (Western) models that deny the *sui generis* character of South Africa. But all this misses the purpose of comparative studies which is not to impose homogeneity but to actually establish specificity, to spark the imagination with alternatives, to comprehend the diverse outcomes from common structures and, thus, essential to the Wolpean research agenda.

- *Mexico-United States*. Wolpe analysis of cheap labor that externalizes the cost of labor force renewal can be found in many international contexts, and not just in the Third World. The Bracero program is the prototype of cheap migrant labor – Mexican single workers left their families behind to work on a contract basis in California agriculture. Today, there are many streams of migrant labor from Mexico – legal and illegal, family and single as well as attempts by the California state to relinquish any responsibility for illegals. With a national border demarcating reproduction from maintenance, the flow of labor is easier to regulate than when the system is organized internally – hence the attempt to create Bantustans as self-governing territories. And

⁴⁰ *Citizen and Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996)

then one might ask in what lies the difference between a Bantustan and an African American ghetto? ⁴¹

- *Palestine-Israel*. The relation between Israel and the Occupied Territories is analogous to the relation between white South Africa and the Bantustans. In both cases there is an attempt to create nominally self-governing homelands for a colonized population. Thus, building the wall to barricade Israel from the West Bank, ostensibly for security measures, parallels the shift from segregation to apartheid. The big difference here is that South African capital was far more dependent on African labor than Israeli capital is on Arab labor. The ANC, therefore, had more power and led a more successful liberation struggle than the PLO which has had so little to bargain with. By the same token Gay Seidman could draw similarities between the South Africa and Brazilian Labor movements because their relation to capital and the state were so similar, and because both economies held a semi-peripheral niche in the world economy. ⁴²
- *Philippines: The Labor Brokering State*. The South African system of migrant labor has been writ large onto the global arena by the Philippine state whose development strategy is focused on the production of migrant laborers for countries all over the world. A series of material, political, legal, and ideological mechanisms organize transnational mobility and reproduce the connection of contract workers to their homeland. Here then is the familiar circulatory migration but on a much bigger scale and the novelty resides in the state production of labor supplies. Indeed, the manufacture and export of labor becomes a state directed development strategy. If it does not already, South Africa will soon face competition from this mass produced labor that has cloned and streamlined the original South African system. ⁴³
- *Agrarian Reform in South East Asia*. If advanced industrialization is not open to South Africa, what equitable economic strategy could it follow? Gillian Hart draws on her rich experience and research in South East Asia to focus on the importance of agrarian reform as the basis of capital accumulation. The secret of Taiwanese and Chinese economic success lies with working class access to small scale agriculture that subsidized low wages, much as the South African reserves did under segregation. She proposes to think about South Africa's land question not in relation to agriculture as such but in relation to a social wage for its working class, moving the population

⁴¹ Michael Burawoy, "The Functions and Reproduction of Migrant Labor: Comparative Material from Southern Africa and the United States." *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(5): 1050-87; Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994). It's not just unskilled male workers who are migrants. Nurses from Kerala are employed all over the United States, leaving husbands and children behind. See, Sheba George, *When Women Come First: Gender, Class, and Transnational Ties Among Indian Immigrants in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, Forthcoming).

⁴² Mona Younis, *Liberation and Democratization: The South African and Palestinian National Movements*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Gay Seidman, *Manufacturing Militance: Workers' Movements in Brazil and South Africa, 1970-1985* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

⁴³ Robyn Rodriguez, *The Labor Brokering State: The Global Production of Philippine Citizen-Workers*. (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2004).

toward a minimum guaranteed material existence. How feasible would it be for workers, or pockets of workers to have access to land? Would this give employers the incentive to squeeze wages even harder as in Russia today where the population is being repeasantized or as in South Africa of yesteryear?⁴⁴

- *Redistributive Development in Kerala.* Perhaps Kerala, with its astounding success in indicators of literacy and welfare, gives an insight into such possibilities of development through redistribution? Michelle Williams and Patrick Heller compare South Africa with Kerala's twin strategies of increasing the capacity of the popular classes through organization, and decentralized budgeting that gives local communities the power to determine their own development priorities. Amartya Sen provides the more general model of development in which the primary goal is not capital accumulation but enhancing people's capability to choose a life that they desire, that is to expand their freedoms. Democracy, not just liberal democracy but a decentralized participatory and deliberative democracy become vehicles of development. What are the preconditions for a state to facilitate such participatory, bottom-up development?⁴⁵
- *Socialism?* And so we finally come to socialism. Wolpe was not alone in failing to consider the meaning of socialism. Just as Marx thought the self-destruction and revolutionary overthrow of capitalism would be sufficient to deliver socialism, so Wolpe thought it was enough to have one's eye on the dissolution of apartheid by winning state power. Indeed, it always seemed such a daunting task that when apartheid morphed out of existence, along with the collapse of Soviet communism, the liberation movement was left without a compass, an exodus without a map as Glen Adler and Edward Webster⁴⁶ put it. In that sense, Marxism had failed the movement. Today, in an era when historical laws are out of favor, when capitalism is neither in crisis nor pregnant with its opposite, what vision of socialism can have credibility? It cannot be a system that replaces capitalism *tout court* but rather one that will grow up within its interstices, as piecemeal challenges to capitalism. We can think of these concrete interstitial experiments as real utopias which the social scientist elaborates into defining principles, and then examines their conditions of reproduction and dissemination, and finally discerning their internal contradictions and inherent dynamics. These real utopias are more likely to emerge within civil society than either the state or the market. This vision restores and centers the social within socialism, subordinating state and market principles. It is a socialism distinct from state socialism and social democracy. Such a socialism will not come from

⁴⁴ Hart, *Disabling Globalization*, *op cit*.

⁴⁵ Patrick Heller, *The Labor of Development: Workers and the Transformation of Capitalism in Kerala, India* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999). Michelle Williams, *Democratic Communists: Party and Class in South Africa and Kerala, India*. (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, In Progress.). Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999).

⁴⁶ Glen Adler and Edward Webster, "Exodus without a Map," in B. Beckman, and L. Sachikonye (eds.), *Liberalisation and Labor Regimes in Africa* (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Press, 2000)

adopting hegemonic priorities but from elaborating counter-hegemonic possibilities, organizations and practices.⁴⁷

Comparing South Africa with other societies, both real and imagined, casts light both on its specificity and its future possibilities, but it also beams back lessons to the rest of the world, lessons about capitalism and racism, about despotism and democracy, about social movements and socialism, about justice and reconciliation, and, most importantly for our purposes, about the place of intellectuals in forging a new world. We must end, therefore, by considering what we have learned about politics and intellectual life. We must revisit Wolpe's 1985 praxis statement.

V: From Legislators to Interpreters

In engaging with the liberation movement Wolpe followed the guidelines he laid out in 1985. He took the priorities of the liberation movement as point of departure but came perilously close to abandoning them, especially with respect to the relation between the national and socialist agendas. In the end he sought to preserve unity rather than accentuate the contradictions between different class projects for postapartheid South Africa. Similarly he did not entertain the study of consciousness. To the last he stuck with structure even when it left him helpless to assess the compromises and class alliances that might develop. Still, he demonstrated that one can travel a long way without considering consciousness and in so doing Wolpe offered a powerful corrective to those who focus on the subjective and discursive.

⁴⁷ Michael Burawoy and Erik Wright, "Sociological Marxism." Pp.459-86 in Jonathan Turner (ed.), *The Handbook of Sociological Theory* (Plenum Books); Michael Burawoy "For a Sociological Marxism: The Complementary Convergence of Antonio Gramsci and Karl Polanyi." *Politics and Society* 31(2): 193-261

He continued his commitment to these same two principles into the period of reconstruction. By force of circumstance and by political commitment, it was obvious he would serve the ANC in power, continuing the policy work in education that he had begun in England. As best he could, he took the Government of National Unity's platform as his point of departure. He wrote about the dilemmas of quality and equity in higher education but it was becoming clear that the priorities of the government were increasingly not his own. He stuck to his guns on consciousness which finds no trace in the documents written for the EPU. There were figures, tendencies, conditions, principles but no attempt to analyze the social forces at work. But as he began to depart from the government's priorities he inevitably raised questions about whose priorities they were and what interests they concealed.

In the new South African dispensation policy work imprisoned Wolpe's critical faculties, precisely at a time when intellectual critique and public engagement were most urgently needed. At the end of his life he replaced the imperative of taking official priorities as given with the imperative of uncovering the interests that lay behind those official priorities. Rather than determine the appropriate means for a given goal, or the possibilities for realizing a given end in any historical conjuncture, the purpose now was to expose the ends themselves, to stimulate debate about the goals of society. The intellectual becomes a critical theorist that opens up the imagination to different possible futures that are off-limits to government reports. By focusing on the capitalist character of South Africa, mystified by the rhetoric of RDP, Wolpe was able to raise the question of socialist alternatives. It was not only a matter of examining what is feasible in any given historical moment but what may be infeasible, yet imaginable.

Challenging official ideology is one important intellectual task in the period of reconstruction, but there is a second one that follows from the first. The social scientist not only engages with ends but also with publics. The investigation of consciousness cannot be left to the party in power when it is more than likely to substitute its interests for those of the people it represents. Intellectuals need to develop organic links with different groups, classes in society. Here too there is a long tradition in South Africa, a long tradition of social commentary based on lived experiences -- literature as well as a public sociology -- that flourished, particularly, in the struggles against apartheid. It is a tradition to which Wolpe in exile was at best indirectly or virtually connected. Today there is no less a need for public sociology, whether to bring publics into being, to help articulate identities, to pursue their interests, and most generally to bring them into civil society as fully responsible and autonomous actors. It is not simply a matter of the intellectual as spokesperson, but the educator too has to be educated, discovering in the lived experience of others those imaginary alternatives that fuel the critical mind and give hope for a better future.

In short, we have two types of intellectuals, which, following Zygmunt Bauman⁴⁸, we can call “legislators” and “interpreters,” corresponding to two divergent strategies of transformation: War of Movement and War of Position. In War of Movement – winning state power under apartheid or designing and implementing state policy in the postapartheid period -- the intellectual-as-legislator engages with the priorities of party or state, discerns the possibilities within any given structural context, so that the social

⁴⁸ Zygmunt Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-modernity, and Intellectuals* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1987). Gramsci’s distinction between traditional and organic intellectuals is entirely different since it attaches intellectuals to classes rather than to strategies of transformation.

scientist can support the projects of the political organ. Wolpe's 1985 praxis statement is a manifesto for intellectual as legislator. It presumes a War of Movement.

On the other hand, the War of Position -- the reconstitution of civil society -- calls for a very different type of intellectual, the interpreter, who is concerned to create a new moral and political order. It calls for an imaginative construction of an ideology that will galvanize a national popular will around social justice for all races and genders while suppressing class inequality; it calls on intellectuals to engage directly with publics and to recompose the institutions of civil society. Wolpe hinted at such an intellectual in his account of the movement for people's education following the Soweto uprising, and reappears in his last vision of the University of Western Cape. However, he never distinguished the intellectual-as-interpreter from the intellectual-as-legislator. Perhaps this was because he was in exile and therefore removed from South African publics. Perhaps it was because he was so deeply implicated in the War of Movement first to dissolve the apartheid state and then in the state-driven reconstruction of South Africa.

It would be wrong to identify *liberation* with War of Movement and the intellectual-as-legislator, while identifying *reconstruction* with War of Position and intellectual-as-interpreter. Both periods call for both War of Movement and War of Position; both periods, therefore, call for both legislators and interpreters. To be sure, the specific combination of the two modes of political transformation will vary in the two periods -- one will dominate but never to the exclusion of the other. Thus, one might argue, that the struggle against apartheid places War of Movement at the forefront whereas building a new South Africa prioritizes a War of Position. That was the position of Frantz Fanon, for example. The directors and spokespersons of the postapartheid state

at the 1997 Wolpe conference, however, seemed to take the opposite view: intellectuals had played an effective interpreter role in the trenches of civil society during liberation, but now they must return to the barracks, to be legislators – focusing on teaching and policy research. It was against this legislative conception of the intellectual that Wolpe was already rebelling in 1995 -- 10 years after he had presented it as the only correct position.

How will his Institute for Social Theory acknowledge this shift? How will IST fit into the politics of reconstruction? IST will have to be a home for interpreters as well as legislators, fostering the critical and public functions of the interpreter. On the one hand, social theory must discipline the critical imagination, by turning alternative visions into real utopias, inquiring into the concrete conditions for their realization and reproduction. On the other hand, social theory will help interpreters locate the lived experience (of the diverse publics they engage) within capitalist South Africa and indeed a capitalist world. Social theory will, thereby, articulate the perspectives of publics in two senses: it will give perspective and voice to various publics but it will also join those perspectives and voices together in an ideological vision of reconstruction. At the same time, IST will also provide the theoretical foundations for policy research, preventing it from being captured by clients, but also sustaining the critical moment within policy work.

In a reverse direction of influence, the agenda of IST will be responsive to the priorities of different publics as well as to policy clients, thereby invigorating the research program it pursues. In the face of such societal and state influences and to give integrity to IST, some such institution-defining agenda as I laid out in the previous section will be necessary, but it will be an agenda in the process of continual revision.

In short, even though IST will be embedded in the world it investigates it will also need autonomy, indeed especially so because it is embedded, if it is to develop a program of social research, responsive to contradictory interests within society, and if it is to engage in “continuous critique of the social order.” It will indeed be, to use one of Wolpe’s favorite phrases, a contradictory unity – *contradictory* because it is embedded in a contradictory society, but a *unity* because it will partake in forging a new hegemony. If there was one thing Wolpe always insisted upon, throughout his life, it was the independence of the intellectual function, and all the more so if the intellectual was to serve political ends. For Wolpe, that is the principle that transcends both liberation and reconstruction, that is the principle which all intellectuals must defend, and that is the principle that will enable them to serve the new order, whether as designers of policy or critical theorists, whether as professional or public social scientists, in short, whether as legislators or interpreters.