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NEOTRIBAL CAPITALISM AND PUBLIC POLICY

ELIZABETH RATA

Abstract

This article provides an overview of the theory of neotribal capitalism, examining neotraditionalist ideology and its influence on New Zealand public policy. The practice of making far-reaching changes at the policy level means that deeper issues of political philosophy are often ignored. The tendency for policy change based upon an uncritiqued neotraditionalist ideology has implications for New Zealand's constitutional development, local government, environmental, health and social welfare issues, and for New Zealand democracy more generally.

Keywords: *Neotribal capitalism, public policy, Maori*

The study of ideas, beliefs and values that become orthodoxies in a society enables a contextual analysis of the ideologies of the powerful interest groups that influence policy formation in direct and indirect ways. In this article I provide a very brief overview of the theory of neotribal capitalism.[1] My purpose is to examine the neotraditionalist ideology that is neotribal capitalism's self-representation and that exerts a strong influence on New Zealand policy.

NEOTRADITIONALISM AND RETRIBALISATION

'Neotraditionalism' is the belief in the revival of traditional kinship societies with primordial origins. People are bound to these communitarian societies by the genealogical ties that constitute their ethnic identity. The identity is fixed and primordial, a biological inheritance from the ancestors expressed in cultural forms, such as language and customs. Cultural continuity ensures the social cohesion required for the expression of this essential ethnic identity.

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1 E. Rata, 'A theory of neotribal capitalism', *Review*, vol. XXII, no. 3, 1999, pp. 231-290; E. Rata, *A Political Economy of Neotribal Capital* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2000); E. Rata, 'Late capitalism and ethnic revivalism: "A new middle age"', *Anthropological Theory*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2003, pp. 43-64; E. Rata, 'Leadership ideology in neotribal capitalism', *Political Power and Social Theory*, vol. 16, 2003, pp. 45-73.

In contrast to neotraditionalism is the modernist abstract idea of a universal human race to which all individuals belong. According to this approach, individuals are born as human beings and then become members of particular ethnic, religious or national groups. The development of membership identity is the result of socialisation into the cultures of those groups, cultures that are themselves the result of changing historical and material circumstances. Because we all have a fundamental human identity, particular forms of identity such as ethnicity are not essential for our social and psychic survival. We can choose whether or not we wish to identify as members of particular groups and adhere to particular ways of living.

To argue, as I do in this paper, that retribalisation is not the revival of the traditional tribes, that treaty partnership interpretation and policy is ideological, and that the politicisation of culture is leading to non-democratic policies, is to engage in debate that is itself a necessary political act in a democracy. Debate is a process located within the 'common political culture of constitutional democracy' occurring in the public domain shared by all citizens, a domain that 'thrives on the conflict generated by these discussions'.[2] In the words of Habermas,[3] the discussion about the relationship between politics and culture is about 'which traditions citizens want to perpetuate and which they want to discontinue, how they want to deal with their history, with one another, with nature and so on'. This paper draws attention to the contribution that the theory of neotribal capitalism can make to this discussion.[4]

The following points summarise the main ideas from the theory of neotribal capitalism. First, the interdependent social movements of retribalisation and biculturalism that enabled the emergence of neotribal capitalism are local responses to contemporary global conditions rather than responses to the experiences of colonisation. Second, the privatisation into corporate ownership, the capitalisation of traditional resources, and their brokerage into global capitalism has created a localised and ethnicised version of the capitalist regime of accumulation, which I refer to as 'neotribal capitalism'. This version is characterised by a capitalist mode of production and a neotribal mode of regulation (the social environment of production).

Third, the capitalisation of traditional resources has changed the relation of people to the resources and to one another in fundamental ways. The classed social relations of neotribal capitalism are not the communal social relations of production that characterise traditional redistributive economic systems. Those in control of the privatisation and brokerage processes, and of the establishment of neotribal modes of regulation, have emerged as a privileged elite class. Fourth, the capitalisation of resources and the creation of social classes in relation to the possession and control of those resources have created a social organisation structured by a

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2 A. Gutmann, 'Preface' in C. Taylor (ed.), *Multiculturalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. ix.

3 J. Habermas, 'Struggles for recognition in the democratic constitutional state' in C. Taylor (ed.), *Multiculturalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 125.

4 I must point out, however, that it is impossible in the space of a journal paper to do justice to the full theoretical argument that underpins all these points and that provides a coherent unity. The full argument is available in Rata, 'A theory of neotribal capitalism'; Rata, *A Political Economy of Neotribal Capital*; E. Rata, 'Conflict and contradiction in Maori-Pakeha Relations: A critique of neotribal ideology in Maori education, *UTS Review*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2001, pp. 135-152; E. Rata, 'The indigenisation of ethnicity' in A. Dirlik and R. Prazniak (eds.), *Place and Politics in the Age of Global Capitalism* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001); E. Rata, 'Class discourses in neotribal capitalism, *Political Crossroads*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2002; E. Rata, *Democratic Principles in Teaching and Learning* (Auckland: Auckland College of Education Monograph Series, 2002); E. Rata, 'The transformation of indigeneity, *Review*, vol. XXV, no. 2, 2002, pp. 173-195; Rata, 'Late capitalism and ethnic revivalism: "A new middle age"'; Rata, 'Leadership ideology in neotribal capitalism'.

capitalist economy (the neotribe) that is fundamentally different from the traditional tribe. This means that the neotribe in its new character as a capitalist regime of accumulation is not the revived traditional tribe, and not, therefore, the legitimate inheritor of traditional resources.

Fifth, the non-traditional character of the neotribe is concealed in a neotraditionalist ideology that is promoted in the culturalist discourse that dominates the public domain. Sixth, the neotraditionalist belief in a revived traditional social structure, including revived leadership, has enabled the elite brokers to emerge as a neotribal capitalist aristocracy. This group is currently adding political capital to its economic capital as a consequence of the widespread acceptance of neotraditionalism. Finally, the brokerage of a political partnership between the elite of the contemporary non-democratic structure (the neotribe) and the liberal democratic nation-state is occurring in a range of legislative and policy initiatives. Such a partnership will undermine conditions that are essential for democracy.

A major premise of the theory of neotribal capitalism is that society is the product of contemporary conditions textured by its history and culture. Marc Bloch's reference to the Arab proverb that 'men resemble their own times more than they do their father'[5] reminds us to look to the contemporary conditions that provide support for the reactionary ideologies of the Counter-Enlightenment tradition and the various forms of fundamentalisms of the post-1960s decades. If we are to understand the true nature of the forces that are changing New Zealand in fundamental ways, we need to understand them in terms of the major changes occurring to global capitalism and Western hegemony.

The new social movements of biculturalism and retribalisation (like the many other new social movements of the 1970s) emerged in response to fundamental changes both to the world economy and to global patterns of cultural formation. Despite the widespread assumption that biculturalism and retribalisation are responses to New Zealand's own historical circumstances, with biculturalism an attempt to redress historical injustices suffered by Maori and retribalisation a revival of traditional social structures, both movements are, in fact, contemporary responses to contemporary circumstances. The reasons for the actual responses themselves, and the concealment of their true contemporary character in a neotraditionalist ideology, are situated in the multi-layered contexts of late capitalism. Locating this pattern of ideological change in the 'dynamics of expansion and contraction of civilized systems themselves',[6] Jonathan Friedman identifies similar ideological shifts at other times of major economic contraction when local forces emerge in response to and as contributors to profound global change.

Maori neotraditionalism, and the shift by leftist biculturalists from various forms of progressive democratic politics in the 1960s to identity politics, primitivism and postmodernism by the 1980s, are examples of the 'glocal' dialectics that characterise this period of global capitalist contraction and the decline of Western hegemony. Indeed, not only Maori revivalism, but eco-fundamentalism, religious fundamentalism and postmodernist intellectualism[7] are responses to the destabilising conditions produced by the disintegration of modernity.

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5 M. Bloch, *Feudal Societies* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 148.

6 J. Friedman, *Cultural Identity and Global Process* (London: Sage, 1994).

7 Citing Lovejoy and Boas' reference to Cynicism [1935: 118] as 'the first and most vigorous philosophic revolt of the civilised against civilisation in nearly all its essentials', Friedman (1994:59) draws parallels between contemporary postmodernity and the Greek Cynic philosophy which followed the decline of the Greek Enlightenment of the 5th and early 4th centuries B.C.

Jurgen Habermas, Jonathan Friedman, Marshall Berman, Brian Barry, Alain Touraine, Peter Munz and Todd Gitlin[8] are among the many contemporary social theorists who have drawn attention to the consequences of abandoning the modernist vision of a universal humanity and the commitment to human reason that are necessary conditions for democratic politics, for a return to local identity, and traditional hierarchies and inequalities. Acknowledging the importance of an ongoing critique of modernity, Touraine warns that 'a critique of modernity must not stray into irrationalism and traditionalism'. Similarly, Berman, in his assertion of the importance of maintaining modernity's faith in reason, critical scrutiny, historical consciousness, and the unifying vision of universalism, suggests that 'remembering the modernisms of the nineteenth century can give us the vision and courage to create the modernisms of the twenty-first'.[9]

The disintegration of modernity that characterises the crisis of Western hegemony with the decentering of global capitalism threatens the conditions necessary for the maintenance of democracy. Modernity's universalism, rationalism, and individual autonomy are the conditions for the 'Enlightenment (that is) man's release from his self-incurred tutelage'.[10] The advocacy of kinship-based forms of social organisation is a rejection of these Enlightenment democratic principles. Identities based upon 'blood and soil' ideologies provide psychological security in response to the constant change and insecurities that are inherent features of modernity's turbulence, that 'strife of the dialectic' which Kant calls a 'necessity of reason'.[11] However, they divide and isolate people along fundamental lines of biology.

> In traditional societies, the family or clan or tribe is the world writ large. The individual is not the mediator between the world and the kin-group. This means that the existence of a world outside the kinship is a conceptual problem for kinship-based societies. How can a common universal humanity be acknowledged? There is the world conceptualised on the basis of kin to which only kin can belong and there is the world conceptualised on the basis of individuals who share a common humanity (which ironically does have its origin in shared kinship, however remote and unacknowledged). The concept of the individual as someone who can be simultaneously attached and separated from the kin-group enables the concept of a common universal humanity. This enables people to belong to and identify with non-kin groups as well as with the kinship-group.[12]

Neotraditionalism is the belief that traditional social relations have been revived. However, its contemporary nature is identified by Habermas[13] as 'ideological traditionalism': that is,

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8 J. Habermas, 'Contributions to a discourse theory of law and democracy' in S. Seidman and J. C. Alexander, *The New Social Theory Reader, Contemporary Debates* (London and NY: Routledge, 2001), pp. 31-38; M. Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: the Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983); B. Barry, *Culture and Equality, An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001); Alain Touraine, *Critique of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); P. Munz, 'From parochial culture to global modernity or mankind's siberian dilemma', Te Tapuae o Rehua Lecture, New Zealand Historical Association Conference, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, 2 December 2001; T. Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1995).

9 Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: the Experience of Modernity*, p. 36.

10 I. Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What is Enlightenment?* (New York & London: Macmillan & Collier, [1784], 1990), p. 84.

11 I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Everyman, [1781], 1993), p. 488.

12 E. Rata, *Democratic Principles in Teaching and Learning.*

13 See Barry, *Culture and Equality, An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism*, p. 259.

'self-conscious traditionalism' which is 'a thoroughly modern movement of renewal'. Although the revival of traditional social relations is impossible in a society structured by a capitalist economic system, neotraditionalism offers a way of representing the past that is timeless, primordial and utopian. Maori neotraditionalism, like many of the various forms of resurgent fundamentalisms that are expressions of the loss of a universal vision for humanity and the rejection of the public domain, embraces primordial ties of tradition and community, and hierarchies of birth and status.[14] A neotraditionalist identity provides 'security and even salvation in times of crisis. It is fixed and ascribed, provides a medium for engagement in a larger collectivity, and provides a set of standards, values and rules for living.'[15]

Neotraditionalism has a place in a democratic polity even though it is an ideology based upon beliefs (such as birth-ascribed inequality and an essentialist gender difference) that are profoundly undemocratic. As the beliefs of individuals in association with other individuals, such ideas pose no threat to the democratic principles that structure the public domain as long as they remain in the private domain. However, neotraditionalism is the ideology of neotribal capitalism. It enters the public domain through the political brokerage of the neotribal ruling elite, where it poses a threat to the democratic nature of that domain. The ideology is used to justify the appropriation of traditional resources by the neotribes and to conceal the emergence of a privileged capitalist aristocracy in beliefs of ascribed traditional leadership. Its pervasive influence is the result of the contingency between neotraditionalism, with its assumed restoration of communal social relations of production, and 'the decentralised forms of labour process and work organisation'[16] of late capitalism. Because neotraditionalism supports the inclusion of traditional resources into national and international capitalism in beliefs about the 'modernisation' of the traditional, its new middle age character is concealed.

Neotribal capitalism 'maintains the capitalist relations of production that characterise the modern period but recreates the social and political relations of the pre-modern period. This means that the contradictory but symbiotic class relations and democratic relations of modernity are replaced by a new association of class relations in conjunction with non-democratic political relations. However, because the non-democratic relations are understood as revived communal relations (and hence non-exploitative) this doubly oppressive new alliance of exploitative class relations of production and traditional ideological relations is concealed.'[17]

THE NEOTRIBE, PUBLIC POLICY AND THE TREATY OF WAITANGI

The contemporary tribe (the neotribe) is fundamentally different from the traditional tribe. The neotribe is an economic corporation with the class relations of any capitalist organisation. People relate to one other, and to material and cultural resources, in fundamentally different ways from the relationships that characterise redistributive traditional social structures. Although resources, such as lands and waters, are the same natural phenomena as in the

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14 Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams.*
15 Friedman, *Cultural Identity and Global Process*, p. 243.
16 S. Hall, 'Brave new world', *Marxism Today*, October (1988), p. 24.
17 E. Rata, 'Late capitalism and ethnic revivalism: "A new middle age"'.

past, their role in the production of commodities and the generation of wealth creates class relations between people in relation to those resources.

The brokerage of resources into a national and international regime of accumulation by a group of elite Maori, and the subsequent privileging of this group in relation to the new capital, transforms the resources and their owners in fundamental ways. Recent attempts to broker knowledge and other non-material resources into capitalist circulation shows the same brokerage process at work.[18] First, the claimants establish traditional 'authenticity' to ownership; then the resource is juridified as legal property available for contractual purposes. In its privatised character it is then available for capitalisation, providing the resource for commodity production and profit accumulation.

Beliefs in the revival of a traditional social structure engaged in modernised economic activity enable the neotribes to claim a political status as inheritors of the traditional social organisations that signed the Treaty of Waitangi. But the treaty was not a political partnership between two political entities. It is the first contract in an ongoing series of legislative, procedual and juridicial measures that have established constitutional democracy in New Zealand over a period of more than a century and a half. During that time a traditional form of organisation based upon kinship and hierarchical status was replaced by a democratic political organisation based upon abstract concepts of universalism and equal rights. As elsewhere, since a contingent link was established between capitalism and modernism from the late eighteenth century, the principles of universalism, equality and citizenship have replaced local (cultural) forms of social organisation following the spread of capitalism throughout the world. This is as true of traditional Western culture as it is of other forms of traditional culture.

Democracy is not a Western cultural form of social organisation imposed upon another culture. Its universalism is as destructive of traditional Western culture as of other localised cultures. Peter Munz has referred to the liberating nature of the destruction of traditional bonds of hierarchy and inequality in the West as in other areas of the world. 'The general law (is) that colonisation is beneficial and a precondition for growth, not because of the positive advantages it bestows but because of the corrosive effects it has on traditions'.[19] (The tendency of neotraditionalists to romanticise traditional life means that the inequalities and harshness of pre-modern life are ignored in favour of a more utopian version).[20]

Similarly, Alberto Martinelli regards the universalising nature of the spread of democracy in the wake of capitalism as the widespread and successful expression of democratic principles that are identifiable in all cultures, not only traditional Western culture. 'In fact, division of powers, due process of law, multipartitism and electoral competition, freedom of speech and free information, are not instances of Western ethnocentrism, but essential ingredients of democratic life, which can be identified in different historical and cultural traditions and which must be generalised at the world level.[21]

The following three examples show the diversity of democratic ambitions throughout time, among different cultures, and expressed as individual or group aspirations. The spread

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18 E. Rata, 'Leadership ideology in neotribal capitalism', pp. 45-73.

19 P. Munz, 'How the West Was Won : Miracle or Natural Event ?', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1991, p. 262.

20 R. Sandall, R. *Culture Cults, Designer Tribalism and Other Essays* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001).

21 A. Martinelli, 'Markets, Governments, Communities and Global Governance', Presidential Address, International Sociological Association XV Congress, Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology, July 2002.

of Christianity throughout the world, with its radical and revolutionary claim that all people are equal in the sight of God, has had a widespread democratising effect, although the tendency to locate such equality in the next world has curtailed its democratic potential in this world. Michael Jackson's account of those Maori who had previously been slaves among the northern Ngapuhi provides a more localised example of the way in which new opportunities for social mobility are democratising for those in fixed low-caste positions. They 'founded schools, improvised writing equipment and educated villagers in remote areas unvisited by European missionaries, thereby gaining in prestige regardless of their social background, often at the expense of more traditional groupings'.[22]

A third example is provided by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the Somali-born Dutch Muslim whose recent criticism of the Netherlands programme of multiculturalism shows that democratic aspirations are as opposed to religious neotraditionalism as to previous forms of traditional oppression. By arguing that the preservation of Muslim identity with separate schools and associations 'encourages the isolation of Muslim women', Ali locates democratic rights in the universalism of the human experience.[23]

The universal character of the democratic public domain means that the cultural preferences of groups must be secondary to the common polity in order to preserve its function as the place for communication across the social divisions. Democracy is the organisation of a public domain (the polity) for the expression and resolution of conflicting demands. Groups come to this domain as individual citizens or as associations of citizens to whom the representatives of the polity are accountable. This is the 'common *political* culture' identified by Habermas[24] as essential to the preservation of democracy. It is marked by mutual respect for rights. Constitutional democracy dedicates itself to this distinction by granting members of minority cultures 'equal rights of coexistence with majority cultures'. Habermas maintains that they are 'individual rights of free association and nondiscrimination, which therefore do not guarantee survival for any culture. The political project of preserving cultures as if they were endangered species deprives cultures of their vitality and individuals of their freedom to revise and even reject their inherited cultural identities. Constitutional democracies respect a broad range of cultural identities but they guarantee survival to none'.

Distinguishing between group rights and individual rights is essential to secure democracy's essential conditions of equality and liberty. In contrast to New Zealand Attorney-General Margaret Wilson's belief that 'individual and group rights need not be constructed in oppositional terms',[25] Brian Barry insists that such opposition is necessary to ensure that group rights remain subject to the liberal requirement for individual liberty: that is, for the right of individuals to come and go from groups according to their own volition. In arguing that 'liberalism cannot accommodate "deep diversity" and it is right not to do so',[26] Barry refers to group rights as 'self-government rights and means [for communities] to protect their religious and cultural practices'. In place of the group rights that accommodate deep diversity, Barry proposes a 'liberal theory of minority rights'. This theory, in accordance

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22 M. D. Jackson, 'Literacy, communications and social change: A study of the meaning and effect of literacy in early nineteenth century Maori society' in I. H. Kawharu (ed.), *Conflict and Compromise* (Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1975).

23 *New Zealand Herald*, 16-17 November 2002.

24 Cited in Gutmann, *Multiculturalism*, p. x.

25 M. Wilson, 'Cultural rights: Definitions and contexts' in M. Wilson and P. Hunt (eds.), *Culture, Rights, and Cultural Rights: Perspectives from the South Pacific* (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2000), p. 20.

26 Barry, *Culture and Equality, An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism*, p. 128.

with the 'fundamental liberal position on group rights (which received its classic formulation in John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*), is that individuals should be free to associate together in any way they like, as long as they do not in doing so break laws designed to protect the rights and interests of those outside the group'.[27]

To dispute claims to a political partnership and claims to the treaty settlements by the neotribal elite is not to dispute the consequences of decades of material impoverishment endured by many Maori nor to dispute the importance of Maori culture and language. Historical grievances from illegal practices should be properly addressed. The Maori language and cultural practices should be recognised as important and significant to New Zealand. The material disadvantages experienced by many Maori, along with other people, should be ameliorated through the provision of true equality of opportunity. However, reparations for injustices, and the recognition of economic and civic rights as well as legal rights, should be within the framework of the New Zealand democratic system, based upon the principles of universalism, citizenship and equality.

The Treaty of Waitangi should be recognised for its important role in the establishment of constitutional democracy and as one of several sources for the justification of reparations for specific instances of illegal acts against property. Contemporary disadvantages that have part of their origins in historical experiences cannot be solved by revisiting those experiences in order to 'correct' them. What can be 'corrected' are the inequalities and injustices of the present, not by returning to the past (which is gone) but by finding political solutions to contemporary problems. The inequalities that exist today have their origins in a complex mixture of the historical imposition of unequal capitalist relations, the inequalities of a traditional hierarchical society, and in contemporary policies. The solution to these inequalities is a political distribution of wealth through emancipatory social and economic policies such as full employment, housing, health and education policies. Reparations for illegal acts in history are a different matter. They should be limited to specific infringements of the law and not payments for the consequences of contemporary inequalities that have diverse historical causes.

NEOTRADITIONALISM AND DEMOCRACY

Criticisms of neotraditionalism are fairly rare in contemporary New Zealand. As Babadzan[28] has noted about anthropologists, many academics tend to appropriate the essentialist ethnic-culturalist discourse that actors hold about the meaning of their own practices rather than provide the critique that enables reflection and scrutiny. This 'uncritical self-representation' that Munz[29] identifies in the writings of Anne Salmond has led to an intellectual orthodoxy which actively promotes a biologically based difference between groups of people.

Gitlin's investigation of the 'reasons so many people (are) attached to their marginality and why so much of their intellectual labour (is) spent developing theories to justify it'[30]

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27 Barry, *Culture and Equality, An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism.*

28 A. Babadzan, 'Anthropology, nationalism and 'the invention of tradition', *Anthropological Forum*, vol. 10, no. 2 2000, pp. 131-155.

29 P. Munz, 'The two worlds of Anne Salmond in postmodern fancy-dress', *The New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1994), pp. 60-75.

30 Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, p. 32.

targets the culturalist approach that has become the orthodoxy amongst New Zealand academics, politicians and commentators. Culturalism, or the politicisation of culture, is an approach that, according to Arif Dirlik's definition, is based upon 'ideologies of culture that tend to divorce concepts of culture and tradition from historical forces of economic change'.[31] It is both an anthropological ideology and an intellectual brokerage mechanism for the institutionalism of neotraditionalism.

Even if one is wary of the biological essentialism of neotraditionalism, the commitment to the value of difference cannot lead in any other direction. In his overview of anthropology, Adam Kuper argues that although 'contemporary anthropologists repudiate the popular ideas that differences are natural and that cultural identity must be grounded in a primordial, biological identity, a rhetoric that places great emphasis on difference and identity is not best placed to counter these views. On the contrary, the insistence that racial differences can be observed between peoples serves to sustain them'.[32] Similarly Walter Benn Michaels argues that cultural essentialism is racial categorisation. 'What's wrong with cultural identity is that, without recourse to the racial identity that it repudiates, it makes no sense'.[33]

Attributing a biological basis to cultural differences leads to the reification of culture as something ahistorical and primordial. The Maori concept of *mauri* suggests Herder's 'volkgeist' or spirit of a people, a spirit which transcends and mystifies human relations. In an age when direct racial or biological references are no longer acceptable, this primordial 'spirit' stands in place of direct reference to 'blood'. 'Spirit' does, however, fulfil the same role by evoking the primordialism of closed communitarian societies.

Despite its place in the intellectual tradition that can be traced from Counter-Enlightenment writers (such as Joseph de Maistre) through to nineteenth century German romantic nationalism, and more recently to postmodernism, culturalist discourse is mistakenly believed to be the liberation doctrine of anti-colonisation. It takes a variety of forms.[34] It can be seen in the popular 'two worlds' approach that promotes difference and undermines universalism. It is the premise of the anti-Western rhetoric that characterises a great deal of Maori scholarship.[35] It is used to justify the claim that only Maori should control Maori knowledge (itself a neotraditionalist idea) and to promote separate development for Maori education.[36]

The inclusion of a fundamentalist anti-modern ideology into the knowledge institutions of a democracy will undermine democracy at its very heart. The maintenance of democracy depends as much upon the reproduction of citizens with certain dispositions as it does on the maintenance of institutions such as parliament and the electoral system. It requires the development of the cognitive and psychological dispositions that enable an individual to perform the tasks of citizenship if he or she desires to do so. These dispositions are identified in a recent monograph[37] that is intended to provide a counter argument to the government's

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31 A. Dirlik, cited in G. White, 'Natives and nations: Identity formation in postcolonial Melanesia' in A. Dirlik and R. Prazniak (eds.), *Place and Politics in the Age of Global Capitalism* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), p. 140.

32 A. Kuper, *Culture, the Anthropologists' Account* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 240.

33 Kuper, *Culture, the Anthropologists' Account*, p. 241.

34 Rata, *Democratic Principles in Teaching and Learning.*

35 L. T. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1999).

36 G. H. Smith, *The Development of Kaupapa Maori: Theory and Praxis*, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis (Auckland: University of Auckland, 1997); Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples.*

37 Rata, *Democratic Principles in Teaching and Learning.*

support for kaupapa Maori education. In that work I argue that kaupapa Maori ideology is an example of the anti-democratic forces that are influential in New Zealand education. The regulatory inclusion of neotraditionalism into the democratic state and the resultant strengthening of ethnic boundaries undermines the dispositions of individual autonomy, objective conceptual thinking, and critical reasoning that are necessary requirements for the exercise of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.[38]

Helen Clark's acknowledgement that 'there is no one in Cabinet actually co-ordinating the insertion of Treaty clauses into new legislation'[39] suggests that more than management issues have been overlooked. It points to the absence of the philosophical discussion that should occur before any fundamental constitutional changes are made to New Zealand's political system. The tendency to make profound and far-reaching changes at the level of policy means that the deeper political philosophy issues are either ignored or reduced to petty disputes based upon opposing ideologies. Alternatively, they are mystified and put beyond the level of human debate. This approach is exemplified by Andrew Sharp's reference to the way in which 'governments and Maori consult the Treaty as if it were an oracle, with too pious a frequency and intensity'.[40]

This tendency for policy change based upon an uncritiqued neotraditionalist ideology to drive constitutional change is exemplified by several major initiatives underway in New Zealand's educational policy designed to extend a kaupapa Maori approach. These include kaupapa Maori research (e.g. the newly established Maori Research Centre for Excellence and the Maori component of the proposed Performance Based Research Funding) and iwi influence over tertiary institutions (the proposed agreement between Ngai Tahu and several South Island universities).

The inclusion of neotraditionalism and its justification in a culturalist discourse is not confined to education. Local government, conservation, health and social welfare are all affected. Given that this practice is a *fait accompli* it may well be too late for a full and scholarly debate about the long term implications for New Zealand democracy. However, a modernist approach demands a less pessimistic conclusion. In the 'interests of reason', Kant[41] exhorts us to base the debates of citizenship upon these questions:

> 'What can I know?
> What ought I to do?
> What may I hope?'

Several centuries later they still provide a sound framework for public policy formation.

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38 Rata, *Democratic Principles in Teaching and Learning;* Rata, 'Leadership ideology in neotribal capitalism'.

39 *Listener*, 16 December 2000, p. 22.

40 A Sharp, 'Blood, custom and consent: Three kinds of Maori groups and the challenges they present to governments', *University of Toronto Law Journal*, vol. 9, no. xii, 2002, p. 15.

41 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 524.