Fast Capitalism
Volume 1 • Issue 2 • 2005

ISSN 1930-014X
doi:10.32855/fcapital.200502.015

The Trek with Telos: A Rememberance of Paul Piccone (January 19, 1940—July 12, 2004)

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Paul Piccone was one of this generation's most influential critical intellectuals, whose analytical work ranged from phenomenological Marxism to analyses of neo-Stalinism in Eastern Europe to Carl Schmitt's geopolitical visions for new modes of civic action. Piccone was born in L'Aquila, Italy on January 17, 1940. He immigrated to the United States with his family at age 14, and they settled in Rochester, New York. After undergraduate studies at Indiana University, he did his doctoral work in philosophy at SUNY-Buffalo where he received his Ph.D. in 1970. He was appointed to a position in the Department of Sociology at Washington University, St. Louis, and published Telos from his office there until he was denied promotion and tenure in 1977. Following a tumultuous administrative and legal struggle to reverse that decision, he left the Midwest to set up shop in New York's East Village in the 1980s.

For over three decades, Telos survived as an independent "quarterly journal of critical thought" under his engaged and always intense editorship. Not long after turning 60, Piccone contracted a rare form of cancer during 2000. He battled it successfully for many long months, but on July 12, 2004, he died at age 64. A sharp philosophical critic and insightful political analyst whose award-winning book Italian Marxism remains the single best study of this subject, Paul Piccone also was the editor, organizer, and publisher of Telos. While he was a renowned scholar of international repute in his own right, Telos is his major legacy to the world, and it is the project for which he is best known.

Many often experienced bombastic or even brusque "first contacts" with Paul Piccone, but that intensity belied how fully he was borne along by a bubbling spirit of self-confidence, tough-mindedness, and craftsmanship. Much of this apparent bombast came from his unusual voice. And, in so many ways, that voice was the quality with which he defined himself—both personally and intellectually. Its sound engaged, enraged, or entranced, but his voice is what most will remember—first, and maybe last—about him. Echoes of this voice gather in his friend's memories, its conceptual cadence still collects thinkers together, and the power continues to move many in their lives. With everyone's memories, from his stories, and in the pages of Telos, Paul Piccone's voice will reverberate across the years for readers and writers.

Much of what Telos editors now do, have done, and will do in the future can be traced back in some way or another to Paul Piccone and Telos. While he could seem bombastic and brusque, he also was a generous and engaging person. Even so, one must keep the picture clear here. Paul Piccone could be quite cantankerous, cranky, or contradictory. On any given day, he would be argumentative and analytical, amusing and alienating, astonishing and aggravating. So time spent with Piccone was never dull. And, as Telos shows, he always strived to be, at the end of the day, ahead of the pack, attentive to his craft, and amazing in his philosophical and political passions.

Unlike too many self-proclaimed liberal academics, who talk the talk but never walk the walk of embracing real difference, Paul strode through life gathering together one of the most truly diverse gaggle of colleagues, collaborators, or real comrades one has have ever seen. From all classes, nationalities, races, identities, religions, occupations, and neighborhoods, a whole host of people would call Paul their friend, and they continued to do so throughout their lives.

Around, through, and within this very diverse array of rich individual "particularity," as Paul might have referred to such a collection of companions in his writings, his spirit continues. In people's stories about his unusual moments, brilliant arguments, nasty comments, silly jokes, little snits, or kind gestures, Paul left a great deal with all of them at different turns in their lives. Piccone was a great friend, astute colleague, and caring mentor. He created Telos, and he brilliantly kept it running for decades. His philosophy and practice of particularity were responsible for much of this success. For many critical theorists in the Anglophone world, he brought them together through the pages of Telos and then often changed how they thought. At the outset, Telos aimed at introducing phenomenological Marxism to North American readers, but it eventually turned to other topics, ranging from Adorno's aesthetics to neo-Stalinism authoritarianism to contemporary populism to Schmitt's geopolitics. Whether they agreed or disagreed with him and his work, Paul Piccone had an immense impact on critical scholars that must not be forgotten.

As Paul Piccone's almost lifelong project, then, it is very important to reevaluate the importance of Telos since 1968. Appropriately, the journal originally billed itself as being "launched on May 1, 1968" in Buffalo, New York, from within the belly of the State University of New York system by a small group of graduate students. Yet, oddly enough, from these beginnings Telos has been an enduring theoretical effort by a handful of radical thinkers with deep suspicions about almost everything and everyone that has come to be associated in the popular imagination with sixties' radicalism, the modern research university, popular counterculture, or the New Left.

Hoping to gain greater insights into the chaos of the Cold War era from the suppressed traditions of Western Marxism and Frankfurt School social theorizing, Telos editors and authors have made much of their lifework out of attacking not only the liberal welfare state but also New Leftism. If one does not believe that the New Left had its own internal critique, that 1960s radicals opposed the liberal welfare state, or that radical counterculturalists resisted the Great Society regime, then he or she can turn to the pages of Telos from issue no. 1 to no. 131 to realize the poverty of pandering philosophical or political punditry, which can be gained elsewhere in other journals, as the zenith of progressive or conservative thought in the United States.

By the same token, many other now conventional pearls of wisdom rolling around in the world's intellectual marketplaces about how no one foresaw the collapse of Soviet communism in the West or anticipated the crisis of liberalism in the United States also can be undercut, if not refuted, by turning through the pages of Telos since 1968. This realization might be hard to accept, because Telos is not, of course, the same sort of allegedly household name that the National Review, Commentary, Dissent or Partisan Review have been. Still, those better-known journals also have been the kitchens where such conventional wisdom has been often cooked and canned. Located first inside of university life at Buffalo, then St. Louis, and only later off-campus in New York City, Telos editors and authors were far removed from the ranks of familiar public intellectuals, whose phone and fax numbers pop-up from rolodexes spun around with the daily news cycle in downtown D.C. or midtown Manhattan, where the media snatch sound bites for on-air talking head commentaries or squibs of scholarship for op-ed columns. Few Telos writers have floated out into the mainstream of American public discourse, although many of have been read and become more recognized widely in Europe, Japan or Australasia. At the same time, those that have gained public exposure, like Lukács, Marcuse, Sartre, Habermas or Adorno in the early days as well as Baumann, Gouldner, Jacoby, Bookchin or Lasch later on, their voices were not reliable sound bite sources. Nonetheless, for over thirty-five years, Telos has remained in the spotlight—typically either in the vanguard or rearguard, as the occasion most suitably warrants—during almost every major development in social and political theory anywhere in North America and Western Europe. Whether it was Antonio Gramsci or Carl Schmitt, solidarity in Poland or perestroika in the USSR, workers' councils in revolutions or radical orthodoxy in religion, the fall of the Soviet bloc or the rise of new populists, Telos usually was there cutting the first theoretical trails into these analytical and political thickets. In fact, without Telos, there would be much less awareness of most strains of neo-Marxist, post-Marxist, and anti-Marxist critical theory.

Through the Telos Press, Piccone also introduced little-known and/or untranslated book-length texts as new translations to American readers, including important works by Antonio Labriola, Gustav Landauer, Lucien Goldman, Jean Baudrillard, Luciano Pellicani, and Carl Schmitt. Plainly, a new generation of critical theory emerged during and around 1968, and then it thrived during the Cold War years in the 1970s and 1980s. In turn, many of its key figures drifted to Telos as an outlet for their analyses. Because of the engagement of Telos with politically-grounded critical theorizing, most Telos authors did not withdraw, like most other academic theorists, into race/gender/class polemics, litcrit aesthetics, historicized hermeneutics, or academic victimology. Under Piccone's guidance, Telos' authors instead have raised hard questions. By concentrating concrete political analyses on the contemporary culture, economy and state made possible by the current capitalist world system, Telos writers have made their mark in many fields. A good cross-section of their names during the first two decades, ranging in the hundreds from Agger

to Zipes, was published on the cover of Telos 75 (Spring 1988). For nearly four decades now, Telos has asked what can critical theorizing—whether inspired by Lukács or by Schmitt—tell us about Western capitalism today as a global system of production and domination? How does it affect the workings of power in the United States? What impact does it have on the changing world system? Why did state socialism survive? How did bureaucratic centralism collapse? And, what forms do cultural, economic, and political domination assume now in present-day networks knitting together global corporate firms, compromised civil societies, and eroding national states?

Telos has probed the dynamics of the current economic and political regime, as it has consolidated its powers in the culture industry, welfare state, corporate capitalist enterprise, global neoliberalism, and transnational ecological destruction, but also has outlined several possible political responses to these forces. Telos also has been engaged politically and culturally in disclosing the changing codes of mystification, power, and domination deployed in this system's social production and consumption of meaning. Where other more liberal theorists might see increasing democratization, growing rationalization, and the reconciliation of the market with government in the strange civil society emerging post-Cold War era, the Telos analysis, more often and more rightly, has seen discord and difference: decreasing democracy, a growing irrationality, and a pernicious totality spreading destruction among its teetering parts.

Ironically, Telos in 2005 sits more or less where it was at its inception: out beyond the margins of the established academy, and still featuring the voices of alternative networks recruited from the contrary currents of many different intellectual traditions. Elements of the New Left, Old Left, New Right, Old Right all percolate traces of anarchism, socialism, populism, and even conservatism into the issues of Telos. To get a sense of this diversity, one needs only to reread back issues of the journal where Herbert Marcuse, Jean Paul Sartre, Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Leo Lowenthal, Juergen Habermas, Claus Offe, and Oskar Negt appear along with Alain de Benoist, Carl Schmitt, Michel Foucault, Christopher Lasch, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean Baudrillard, Norbert Elias as well as Alvin Gouldner, Murray Bookchin, William Leiss, Andre Gorz, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Paul Feyerabend, Cornelius Castoriadis, Claude Lefort or Russell Jacoby, Mark Poster, Martin Jay, Doug Kellner, Joel Kovel, Trent Schroyer, James Schmidt, Stuart Ewen, Herb Gintis, John Zerzan and Regis Debray, Karel Kosik, Georg Lukács, Ferenc Feher, Agnes Heller, Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik, and Rudolf Bahro. Looking back at Telos after more than thirty-five years, readers will easily find most of the more significant groups of outriders, outlaws, and outsiders working in the transatlantic communities of cultural, political, and social theory. Some are internationally known public intellectuals; some are exiled émigrés; some are well-established academics; and some are free-lance critics. Yet, all of them have gained considerable importance, during and after, their time with Telos.

A select sample, for example, of some Telos editors from 1968 to 2005, which follows this commentary as an appendix, also lists how many important figures in contemporary social, political, ethical, and cultural thought (along with only some of their book-length publications) have made this trek through time over the years with Telos. This list includes such individuals as Seyla Benhabib, Carl Boggs, Cornelius Castoriadis, Andrew Feenberg, Ferenc Feher, Paul Gottfried, Agnes Heller, Axel Honneth, Russell Jacoby, Martin Jay, Christopher Lasch, William Leiss, James Schmidt, and Sharon Zukin. Paul Piccone and most Telos editors have had little use for more mainstream journals, and many liberal-minded thinkers largely were ignored in Telos due to their preoccupations with recapitulating banal social science and politically correct discourse. From its initial popularization of Georg Lukács and the Frankfurt School of critical theory to its current investigations of radical orthodoxy and Carl Schmitt, Piccone and the editorial associates of Telos have pushed into those regions where few others either on the left or right have gone before, but also where many will soon choose to settle after outriding pathfinders from Telos have surveyed and mapped those unknown terrains.

Since May 1, 1968, then, Telos has introduced a diverse array of hitherto undiscussed or often undiscovered intellectual debates to a global English-speaking audience. Paul Piccone had a remarkable gift of political foresight about significant fresh intellectual developments and a talent for gathering new critical contributions about these ideas from numerous editors, authors, and commentators in many different Telos' networks. It was an achievement of Piccone's that should have recognized and rewarded by an allegedly modern research university, like Washington University, St. Louis.

Yet, it was not. In fact, as his academic career effectively was ended there, and his critical theoretical work in Telos also was increasingly sidelined, then sanctioned, and finally shunned after 1977 through the present-day. This reaction is astounding given how much Paul's work with Telos, and the writings that Telos brought into greater intellectual currency, have made significant contributions to American intellectual life. At the same time, the conditions under which Paul Piccone operated—first inside of a major research university and then later outside of

it as an independent scholar—say much about the reorganization and disoperation of academic activity in the U.S.A. over the past generation. On one level, what happened to Paul Piccone might reveal only the accidental fortunes of one person in one discipline-based department at Washington University, St. Louis at a specific time and place. Still, on another level, these professional particulars track larger trends touching upon all research universities and affecting too many departments, colleges, and disciplines as higher education in the U.S.A. has faced new internal pressures and external demands since the neoliberal revolution of the 1970s and 1980s.

Paul's work on Telos always was important and interesting. Still, its importance always should be seen in terms of how he coped with the reorganization of scholarly labor as he and Telos were forced to work around an "academic community" being restructured as the "knowledge business." As this change unfolded, the conditions in which independent scholarship and journals of criticism were received in the cities, economies, and societies where they are produced and consumed also changed radically. Paul's ouster from university life as well as his decision to relocate to New York from St. Louis took place at a critical turning point for the devolution of modern research universities, liberal arts disciplines, and the role of scholarship in public life.

Clearly, a sea change in the will of mass publics to pay for collective goods swamped over liberal capitalist democracies in the 1970s, as the election of Thatcher in 1979 and Reagan in 1980 illustrated. Despite their neoliberal rhetoric, neither government's size nor spending shrank, but many believed they were as hitherto public services were outsourced to corporate contractors and as onetime collective goods were transformed into private responsibilities through student loans, defined contribution pensions, personal health care programs, individual child-care schemes, and for-profit infrastructure projects. Higher education was one of the first social programs to shift from a "general good" to a "user pays" logic, which put highly marketable, more apolitical, and old-line professional programs in the driver's seat on campus. Denying tenure to one sociologist, like Paul Piccone, dismantling a well-known sociology department, like the one at Washington University, St. Louis, and then denigrating those, like Paul, his colleagues, and many students, in the 1970s and 1980s with aspirations to take more radical civic paths in the future, was a very clear indicator of what lay ahead.

Despite the public relations blather in student recruitment literature for major research universities, most academic journals at such institutions are not always welcomed or even highly valued. Instead, they are labors of love, kept alive by dedicated editors and authors usually working with little or no institutional support. Once disconnected from the academy, even though they often are somewhat marginal in that milieu as well, journals for scholarly communication like Telos are even more difficult to sustain. The devotion of a small cadre of readers, the ever-shrinking lineup of maverick authors, and the implacability of the editor are what kept Telos going for decades. This was true when it was on campus at SUNY-Buffalo, Toronto or Washington University, St. Louis, but it became fundamental to the journal's survival off-campus in New York's East Village since the 1980s. Known more abroad than at home, followed more by those in prison than those in power, seen as crossing over the line when others feared even approaching the border, celebrated for its irreverent and unrelenting critique, Telos is a strange periodical that documents a stranger period in a one of the strangest lands around. And, this makes it essential reading.

Frequently vilified for its renegade disposition, ruthless editing, and radical orientation, Telos has never been a "professionally correct" operation. Indeed, many individuals associated with it over the years left in a huff—some personal, others political, some philosophical, and others polemical. In turn, those who endured in the intellectual networks tied into Telos often were regarded as professional pariahs, intellectual oddballs or disciplinary scofflaws. Linked loosely together by Paul Piccone, the Telos network has trekked for decades into and out of many exciting debates, stretching across topics from the Second International to the Cold War era to today's war on terrorism. Most were interesting, many were insurgent, and much of their substance blazed theoretical trails followed only years later by the timid "normal science" crowds in social science, philosophy, critical theory or the humanities. While such work has not been valued in the professional mainstream of many university departments, its value goes far beyond the small conversations conducted among those individuals nattering about the latest methodological innovations that preoccupy too many insipid, intellectual interactions. As the research university has turned toward generating measurable outcomes of applied knowledge, Telos always demonstrated something better waits beyond bland disciplinary boundaries in transformative engagé scholarship.

Rethinking one academic administrative event a generation ago, in remembering Paul Piccone's life then, is not meant to rehash the merits or demerits of his denial of tenure and promotion by Washington University, St. Louis during 1977 through 1979. Instead when looking back, one must recognize in this incident the many signs of larger and longer-lasting tendencies that continue today. At the same time, a look back reaffirms the accuracy of judgments about bigger transitions in higher education that Paul Piccone made as he saw them unfolding out of the second and

third order implications of his dismissal at that time. Clearly, Piccone's experience in 1977 anticipated much of this era's treatment of critical scholarship and higher education, as liberal capitalism in the United States plods toward 2007 and the 400th anniversary of its "founding" at Jamestown.

Paul Piccone's life as an intellectual, and the role of Telos as a decisively important journal for critical scholarly communication, matured alongside structural disruptions in the workings of American research universities. Paul's commitment to the demands of critical discourse from 1968 through 2004 was exemplary. His own intellectual project had many pluses and a few minuses, but the knowledge businesses of the research university ignored them all. Therefore, Telos must carry on with Paul's work, and advance the merits of sustained critique. Here, tough-minded scholarly communication, like that which has come together through Telos, or what will develop with Fast Capitalism, should continue serving all those who will need, have needed, or need now the intellectual and practical benefits that open, free and critical learning always were meant to provide.

Appendix: Various Telos Editors 1968-2005

This list of various editors, editorial board members, and Telos group participants from 1968 through 2005 is not complete. It simply provides a select overview of the range of individuals who have worked with the journal over the past years for now nearly four decades. As the list indicates, it is an eclectic group of critical thinkers and writers from around the world as well as from across a wide variety of disciplinary fields in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Telos clearly has benefited from the diversity of their perspectives, the intensity of collaborations together, and variety of work that they contributed to the journal as writers, reviewers, and editors. I also want to note the invaluable research assistance contributed by Karen Jenkins, Marcy H. Schnitzer, and Xi Chen in compiling and editing this bibliography.