Let the Lunatics Run their Own Asylum

Participatory Democracy at the University of Sydney, 1960–1979

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Introduction

Participatory democracy lay at the heart of student movements that erupted around the world in the 1960s. For students who eschewed ideology in favour of an eclectic anti-ideology, it was not merely an organisational form, but a mode of being, the hope for a more democratic and just community. The idealism of this time was not matched by any lasting reality, yet it drew attention not only to the inadequacies of representative democracy, but also to the need for reconceiving democracy along temporal lines.[1] Rather than seeking democracy in specific institutions or procedures, it can be located in transitory moments. Democracy is not where the political occurs, but how and when it is experienced; in fleeting and fragile instances of democratic legitimacy.

Despite the centrality of participatory democracy in student movements, little work has been done in Australia to understand the concept in either historical or theoretical terms. It has disappeared with even greater speed than it burst onto the political scene, fading to become little more than an historical curiosity. Although entering the historical consciousness of Australians to a greater extent than any other student movement that preceded or followed it, the 1960s Student New Left has nonetheless been relegated to the same historical dustbin as Marxism. It is remembered, with either a nostalgia or embarrassment, only by those who experienced it and the slogan 'Student Power' has been rendered an empty doctrine. The student movement's ephemeral success in deepening democracy and reanimating the public sphere has been ignored and a valuable piece of social, cultural and political history has been discarded in the process.

This thesis will explore one key democratic moment that occurred in the student movement at Sydney University in the 'long sixties'. Sydney University was a site of both theoretical and actual challenge to existing hierarchies of power. It is this unity of theory and practice that is the most exciting aspect of these events and invites both historical and theoretical investigation. In the university context participatory democracy took on unique dimensions as the perceived amateurism of students clashed

[1] Sheldon Wolin, 'Fugitive Democracy', *Constellations*, 1, no. 1 (1994), p. 11.

most dramatically with the professional expertise of professors, raising questions of academic freedom, intellectual excellence, control of knowledge and pedagogy.

In a radicalised environment, students and sub-professorial staff throughout the university were increasingly demanding the right to participate in the making of decisions that affected their education. Students and junior staff were attempting to wrest control of knowledge away from the 'university administration', defined as the Professorial Board, the Senate, the Vice-Chancellor and the 'God-Professors'. Decentralisation of decision making structures is fundamental to participatory democracy, and hence for students, the department was the born opponent. While 'departmental revolutions' were attempted right across the university, including the Departments of Economics, History and Social Work in particular, the Philosophy Department was the epicentre of it all; the culmination of the trend for student power and the catalyst for further changes.

The Philosophy Department was distinctive for being the only department that 'democratised.' In November 1972, for the first time in the university's history, all sub-professorial staff and students were granted the right to participate and vote at departmental meetings. The department became an island of democracy in a sea of hierarchy and a major irritant in the eyes of the university. Following an intense period of division and antagonism both within the Philosophy Department and between the department and the university, a major conflict erupted in June 1973 when the Professorial Board rejected the course, 'The Philosophical Aspects in Feminist Thought' proposed by two PhD candidates, Liz Jacka and Jean Curthoys. The course had been accepted at department and faculty level and its rejection by the Professorial Board was viewed by students and junior staff as a display of illegitimate authority. The consequences of this decision reverberated throughout the university. After a month long strike, during which many staff and students refused to teach and attend prescribed lectures, the course was finally approved. However, conditions within the department had deteriorated to the extent that Vice-Chancellor Bruce Williams decided to divide the Philosophy Department in September 1973 into the Department of General Philosophy and the Department of Traditional and Modern Philosophy, together constituting the School of Philosophy. Radical students and staff were

given the chance to build a democratic enclave in the newly formed Department of General Philosophy, which operated according to a democratic constitution for six years, but became increasingly riven by conflict. The constitution was suspended with muted protest in 1979.

I will explore the rise and fall of this extended democratic moment, seeking to understand what led to its dramatic and unpredicted emergence. In this period of rupture and crisis, participatory democracy was apparent in two dimensions, namely, in the organisation of the movement itself and in the demands students and junior staff placed on Sydney University to open up its hierarchical system of government. The nature of both these aspects will be examined through the arguments and actions of participants themselves. Yet this democratic moment was also extended in time, in the institutional form of the Department of General Philosophy. Understanding the function and subsequent failure of the department is also of historical significance. It provides rare insight into a polity attempting to function according to the principles of participatory democracy for a significant period of time.

The student movement at Sydney University in the 1960s and early 1970s was a local expression of a global phenomenon, and explanations for its emergence can be sought at various levels of analysis.[2] While transnational approaches are important in recognising similarities and trends, including ideological and organisational links between student movements around the world,[3] they have a tendency to slide past or reconstruct from a global norm the actual histories of dissent.[4] However, abstract explanations for student movements are common, partly resulting from the fact that the revival of student politics in Australian universities was contemporaneous with the rise of the New Left internationally. In 1968, two radical lecturers at Sydney University, Rowan Cahill and Terry

[2] Jennifer Clarke, *Aborigines and Activism: Race, Aborigines and the Coming of the Sixties to Australia* (Adelaide: UWA Press, 2009), p. 12. Lipset comes to a similar conclusion regarding the American student movement: Seymour Martin Lipset, *Rebellion in the University: A History of Student Activism in America* (London: Routledge, 1972), p. 3.
[3] On these organisational links see Martin Klimke, *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 95. Stanley Aronowitz describes the efforts of German sociologist Herbert Marcuse in bringing together the two sides of the Atlantic in a co-sponsored SDS 1966 Congress between students from the United States and Germany. Stanley Aronowitz, 'The Unknown Herbert Marcuse', *Social Text,* 58, no. 1 (1999), p. 135.
[4] See Jeremi Suri, 'The Rise and Fall of an International Counter-culture, 1960-1975', *American Historical Review,* 114 (2009), pp. 45-68. See also: Terry Anderson, 'Letter to the Editor', *American Historical Review*, 117 (2009), pp. 885-886.

Irving noted that, ‘Many of the current explanations of student unrest operate at a level of generality far above the institutions moulding Australia’s 100,000 students.’[5] Although generalisations are largely unavoidable when discussing an imagined community, not of the oppressed, but of the affluent, privileged and enraged, such an approach homogenises differences both between and within nations. While recognising the global ‘winds of change’, this thesis seeks to counter this historiographical trend by focussing on the events at one university and locating them in their broader context.

At the heart of this thesis is the recognition of the importance of analysing the thought and actions of student movements in their wider social, political and cultural context. As philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas notes, ‘I consider it philosophical enlightenment when sociologists, directed by professional historians, apply some of their general hypotheses to historical material and thereby become aware of the inevitably forced character of their generalisations.’[6] Through a focus on this key moment, in combination with the broader aspects of the student movement as it arose in Australia in the 1960s I aim to analyse the central aspect of participatory democracy in a deeper and more meaningful manner.

This thesis straddles several fields of inquiry, including the history of student movements and the New Left, the political, cultural and social history of Australia in the 1960s and the institutional history of Sydney University. It is also relevant to particular aspects of democratic theory, particularly deliberative and agonistic models that rarely delve into detailed empirical and historical analysis.[7] I aim to unite the theoretical and historical elements necessary to provide a comprehensive understanding of the nature of participatory democracy in the student movement at a particular point in history.

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[5] Rowan Cahill and Terry Irving ‘The Student Mood: Sydney University’, *Dissent,* no. 23 (Spring 1968), p. 19.
[6] Jürgen Habermas, *Towards a Rational Society* (London: Heinemann, 1971), p. 8.
[7] Pizzorno discusses the lack of ‘historical reconstruction’ which has hampered efforts towards a ‘rational reconstruction’ of participatory theory. Alessandro Pizzorno, ‘An Introduction to the Theory of Political Participation’, *Social Science Information*, 9, no. 5 (1970), p. 57. See also: Serge Moscovici and Willem Doise, *Conflict and Consensus: A General Theory of Collective Decisions* (London: Sage, 1994).

Accordingly, this thesis contributes to several intersecting historiographical nodes. At its broadest it contributes to the transnational literature on student movements. This vast literature is dominated by American theorists and the historical rise of the American student movement. From the outset of the student movement in Australia, while some commentators pointed to the 'pitfalls of mechanically applying overseas analyses and schemes to the Australian case', this American literature was used as the starting point for discussion in Australia by students themselves. [8] Even those who decried the existence of a purely Australian analysis generally worked within an analytic framework imported from American theory.[9] However, care must be taken when utilising this literature historiographically. Despite certain commonalities, the differences which existed between Australian and American society cannot be overlooked.

There is a dearth of literature on the history of sixties student movements in Australia. Don Beer described the historiography in 1998 as 'rudimentary,' and little has changed in the intervening decade.[10] Generally the literature either focuses on an overview of the student movement in general or on case studies at specific universities. In terms of nationwide overviews, a very limited number of published works exist.[11] While these capture the vitality and energy of the student movement, they are largely celebratory. Discussion of student movements also intersects with a much more substantial body of literature on the anti-war movement,[12] the New Left,[13] Women's Liberation and feminism,[14]

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[8] Richard Gordon and Warren Osmond, 'An Overview of the Australian New Left' in Richard Gordon (ed.), *The Australian New Left: Critical Essays and Strategy* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1970), p. 6.
[9] Graham Hastings, *It Can't Happen Here: A Political History of Australian Student Activism* (The Students' Association of Flinders University, Adelaide, 2003).
[10] Don Beer (ed.), *A Serious Attempt to Change Society: The Socialist Action Movement and Student Radicalism at the University of New England 1969-75* (Armidale: Kardoorair Press, 1998), p. 3.
[11] Mick Armstrong, *1,2,3,4 What Are We Fighting For? The Australian Student Movement from its Origins to the 1970s* (Melbourne: Socialist Alternative, 2001); Hastings, *It Can't Happen Here.* A number of unpublished theses exist: Lani Russell, Today the Students, Tomorrow the Workers! Radical Student Politics and The Australian Labour Movement 1960-72, Phd, University of Technology, Sydney, 1998. There are also several journal articles, see for instance: Christopher Rootes, 'The Development of Radical Student Movements and Their Sequelae', *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 34, no. 2 (1988), pp. 173-186.
[12] Ralph Summy, 'Militancy and the Australian Peace movement, 1960-67', *Politics* (November 1970), pp. 148-162; Ann Curthoys, 'The anti-war movements' in J. Grey and J. Doyle (eds.), *Vietnam: War Myth and Memory, Comparative Perspectives on Australia's War in Vietnam* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1992); Ann Curthoys, 'Mobilising Dissent: The Later Stages of Protest' in G. Pemberton (ed.), *Vietnam Remembered* (Sydney: Weldon Publishing, 1990); Michael Hamel-Green, 'The Resisters: A History of the Anti-Conscription Movement 1964-1972' in Peter King (ed.), *Australia's Vietnam: Australia in the Second Indo-China War* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983), pp. 100-128; Greg Langley, *A Decade of Dissent, Vietnam and the Conflict on the Australian Home Front* (North Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1992); John Murphy, *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's*

Aboriginal protest,[15] the youth and counter-culture[16] and the sixties in general.[17] However, student movements are addressed only obliquely, and the links between the student movement and participatory democracy have not been explored in any depth.

The literature on student movements and the sixties more generally is dominated by those who were involved, blurring the lines between primary and secondary sources. This is not simply the result of the proximity of published works to the events described but also due to the self-reflexivity that student activists brought to both their early and later works. Student activists, many of whom now have academic careers, are frequently both eloquent and self-reflexive integrating their activist experience with knowledge of the secondary literature. As victories in the streets became illusory, activists turned to a study of the past.[18] Indeed the historiography of student movements and the sixties in general is entering a new phase, as these former activists begin to retire from the public sphere and a new generation enters the conversation with neither the benefits nor baggage that accumulates from lived experience.

In terms of the histories of individual universities around Australia, various books and articles have been written,[19] including a large number of unpublished theses.[20] The institutional history of Sydney

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Vietnam War (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993); Michael Saunders, '"Law and Order" and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement: 1965-1972', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 28, no. 3 (1982), pp. 267-378.

[13] Gordon, *The Australian New Left*.

[14] Siobhan McHugh, *Minefields and Miniskirts: Australian Women and the Vietnam War* (Sydney: Doubleday, 1993); Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal; the History of Australian Feminism* (Allen and Unwin, 1999); Verity Burgmann, *Power and Protest: Movements for Change in Australian Society* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993). Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonization of Women in Australia* (Melbourne: Pelican, Press 1995); Ann Curthoys, 'Doing it for themselves' in K. Saunders and R. Evans (eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation,* (Sydney: Harcourt, 1992).

[15] Jennifer Clarke, *Aborigines and Activism*; Ann Curthoys, *Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2000).

[16] Barry York, 'Power to the Young' in Verity Burgmann and J. Lee (eds.), *Staining the Wattle: A People's History of Australia Since 1788* (Fitzroy: McPhee Gribble Publications, 1988); Dennis Altman, 'The Personal is the Political' in Brian Head and James Walter (eds.), *Social Movement and Cultural Change: Intellectual Movements and Australian Society* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 309; Michelle Arrow, *Friday on our Minds: Popular Culture in Australia since 1945* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009).

[17] Robin Gerster and Jan Basset, *Seizures of Youth: The Sixties and Australia* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1991); Donald Horne, *A Time of Hope* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1980).

[18] Alan Barcan, 'Student Activists at Sydney University 1960-1967: A Problem of Interpretation', *History of Education Review*, 36, no.1 (2007), p. 6.

[19] Michael Hyde (ed.), *It is Right to Rebel* (Free Association Press: Sydney, 1972); Don Beer, *A Serious Attempt to Change Society*; Barry York, *Student Revolt! La Trobe University 1967-73* (Campbell: Nicholas Press, 1989).

University demonstrates a similar paucity in relation to student movements in the 1960s, despite a rich history of dissent. An overview of student dissent in the first half of the twentieth century is provided by Alan Barcan in *Radical Students: The Old Left at Sydney University.* However, Barcan's aim is to demonstrate continuities in the student movement at Sydney University and it does not explore the 1960s student movements.[21] Various biographical texts include information on disputes such as Bruce Williams' *Making and Breaking Universities.*[22] The two volume official history of Sydney University considers various disputes as part of the institutional history of Sydney University but eschews detail as part of a larger historical narrative.[23] Moreover work has been done on specific departments and disputes, such as Barbara Caine's work on the History Department and the recent publications concerning the political economy dispute.[24] This thesis will focus primarily on the Philosophy Department, but will also explore the arguments put forward for democratisation by staff and students in the Government Department, which occurred concurrently with the philosophy dispute. There is no similar study of the Government Department, where proposals for democratisation were debated with insightful tenacity, yet an examination of this debate provides a unique window by which to view and understand demands for participatory democracy.[25]

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[20] Russell surveys a number of these theses. See Lani Russell, Today the Students, Tomorrow the Workers, p 5. Of particular relevance are: A. Draper, Adelaide Student Radicals: Then and Now, 1968-80, BA Hons, Adelaide University, 1980; J. Ockenden, Anti-War Movement and the Student Revolt at Monash: An Examination of Contending Ideologies 1967-1970, BA Hons, Monash University, 1985. B. Pola, Perspectives on the Australian Radical Student Left Movement 1966-1975, PhD, School of Education, La Trobe University, 1988. C. Walker, The Protestors on Campus: opposition to the Vietnam War and National Service Act in the Three Sydney Universities, 1968-1972, BA Hons, Macquarie University, 1994.

[21] Alan Barcan, *Radical Students: The Old Left at Sydney University* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002); Bruce Williams, *Liberal Education and Useful Knowledge: A Brief History of the University of Sydney, 1850–2000* (Sydney: University of Sydney Chancellor's Committee, 2002).

[22] Bruce Williams, *Making and Breaking Universities: Memoirs of Academic Life in Australia and Britain 1936-2004* (Sydney: Macleay Press, 2005). See also: Ken Buckley, *Buckley's! Ken Buckley: Historian, Author and Civil Libertarian: An Autobiography* (Sydney: A and A, 2008), p. 270.

[23] W.F. Connell et al, *Australia's First: A History of the University of Sydney, 1940-1990* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1995).

[24] Barbara Caine et al (eds.), *History at Sydney: Centenary Reflections* (Canberra: Highlands Press, 1992).Gavin Butler, Evan Jones and Frank Stilwell, *Political Economy Now! The Struggle for Alternative Economics at the University of Sydney*, (Sydney: Darlington Press, 2009); Peter Groenewegen, *Re-educating for Business, Public Service and the Social Sciences: A History of the Faculty of Economics at the University of Sydney 1920-1999* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2009); Williams, *Making and Breaking Universities*, pp. 78-121.

[25] The only work on the Government Department is the following is: Sue Wills, 'The Philosophy Strike: The View from the Department of Government', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 13, no. 27 (1998), p. 65; Peter Groenewegen, *Re-educating for Business*, pp. 154-155.

Events in the Philosophy Department have been considered to a greater extent. John Burnheim, a senior lecturer in the Philosophy Department lamented in 1972 that 'the history of our problems is complex and not many people are going to feel that it's so important as to be worth their trouble to unravel it.'[26] However, various authors have found the events worth returning to. Selwyn Grave's *History of Philosophy in Australia* and James Franklin's *Corrupting the Youth* have explored the split in alternative visions of the history of philosophy in Australia.[27] David Armstrong provided his own historical perspective on the disputes in his autobiographical account.[28] The period has also been explored in terms of the history of feminism, in Megan Jones' thesis *Remembering Academic Feminism* and in a conference entitled, 'The Return of the Repressed: Feminism in the Quad', which led to a series of articles in *Australian Feminist Studies*.[29] Jones' thesis in particular provides a useful starting point for understanding the interaction between feminism and democracy in student movements. Jones demonstrates that feminism bears a fundamental resemblance to democracy in challenging of hierarchies of oppression. David Rayment provides a micro-history of the events leading up to the split. However, to a large extent Rayment's thesis revolves around the issue of staff personalities, viewing the conflict to be a result of personal animosity and intransigence.[30] Moreover, the history is still being written. Hannah Forsyth's forthcoming PhD explores the philosophy split as part of her study on the control and ownership of knowledge in Australian Universities. Furthermore, John Burnheim and Paul Crittenden look at the events as part of their forthcoming work on the history of philosophy in Australia and New Zealand. Through this literature, other period pieces and ample

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[26] John Burnheim, 'Is There a Plot', *Honi Soit*, 14 September 1972.

[27] Selwyn Grave, *A History of Philosophy in Australia* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1984). James Franklin, *Corrupting the Youth: A History of Philosophy in Australia* (Sydney: Macleay Press, 2003). This book originated from a series of articles in *Quadrant*: James Franklin, 'The Sydney Philosophy Disturbances', *Quadrant*, 43, no. 4, 1999, pp. 16-21; John Burnheim, 'The Destruction of Philosophy', *Quadrant* 43, no. 7-8 (1999), pp. 20-23; James Franklin, 'T & M Philosophy: The End', *Quadrant*, 41, no. 5 (2000), p. 51. See also Andrew Giles-Peters, 'The Marxist Tradition' in J.T.J. Srzednicki and D. Wood, *Essays on Philosophy in Australia* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992) and the entries in Graham Oppy and N. N. Trakakis (eds.), *A Companion to Philosophy in Australia and New Zealand* (Monash: Monash University Publishing, 2010).

[28] David Armstrong, 'Self Profile' in Radu Brogdan, *D.M. Armstrong* (Dordrecht: Reidel Publishing Company, 1984). These events are also discussed in several other biographical accounts. See also: Paul Crittenden, *Changing Orders: Scenes of Clerical and Academic Life* (Blackheath: Brandl and Schlesinger, 2008).

[29] Megan Jones, Remembering Academic Feminism, PhD, University of Sydney, 2002; Alison Bashford, 'The Return of the Repressed: Feminism in the Quad', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 13, no. 27 (1998), pp. 47-53.

[30] David Rayment, The Philosophy Department Split at Sydney University, Honours Thesis, University of Sydney, 1999.

archival material, it is possible to reconstruct the events occurring in the Philosophy Department.[31] While the facts are not in dispute, it is at the level of meaning and significance that there is ample room for debate and further exploration is needed.

Part of the reason for its relative historical popularity is that the philosophy disputes, especially the strike which ran from 21 June until 17 July 1973, has become folk-lore in the history of Sydney University: an important intersection between myth, memory and history. Alison Bashford noted:

> Along with the anti-war moratorium, the strike seems to crystallise what has become a culturally mythic time and place, the early 1970s when universities were forums for real social change and students were at the centre of it. The strike is part of an intellectual and cultural history of Sydney: for some it is connected to Andersonian philosophy or even represents the death throes of the Push.[32]

Yet with the reunification of the School of Philosophy in 1999, this period is quickly receding from popular memory, as students no longer wonder about the existence of two departments. Moreover, the staff who have been the main conduits in the transmission of institutional culture are now retiring from academia. Hence, it is important to return to these events in order to understand the demands and hopes of this movement in their historical form. Aside from the recent work of Hannah Forsyth, John Burnheim and Paul Crittenden, although lip service has been paid to contextual events such as 'Vietnam', little has been done to place these events in their broader historical context, including the expansion of universities and development of the student New Left.

Throughout the historiography on the philosophy disputes and the Australian student movements in general, the link between participatory democracy and student movements has not been directly addressed. Although it is recognised as being one of the central themes of the rise of the Student New

[31] Peter Westmore, 'The Strike at Sydney University: June-July 1973', *Quadrant* (August 1973), pp. 23-29.
[32] Alison Bashford, 'The Return of the Repressed: Feminism in the Quad', p. 47.

Left, its precise meaning and historical manifestation has not been explored.[33] The case study of the strike and subsequent history of the Department of General Philosophy provides a unique platform through which to understand this connection. Moreover, while the events surrounding the strike have been examined, the democratic functioning of General Philosophy has been ignored. This partly results from the fact that the history of General Philosophy does not capture the historical imagination in quite the same manner as the more colourful strike which preceded it. However, for the purposes of this thesis, the democratic functioning of General Philosophy is of vital historical as well as theoretical significance. The Department of General Philosophy was the only example of a university department operating along democratic lines in Australia. The decline of democratic break-outs are the mirror image of their rise and valuable insight can be gained by exploring this particular example.[34]

There is ample documentary evidence, as Challis Professor of Philosophy David Armstrong noted, 'to take a PhD on the subject.'[35] Armstrong was referring to his own collection, which was fastidiously maintained.[36] Armstrong was a central player in the disputes in the Philosophy Department, a firm believer in the legitimacy of a hierarchically ordered university with professorial power at the pinnacle. Armstrong's personal intransigence did much to antagonise both colleagues and students in the Philosophy Department and his role must be kept in mind when exploring this conflict. While a one-sided archive may be expected, constructed to justify Armstrong's actions for future historians in what was a heavily politicised dispute, the archive evinces a diametrically opposing tendency, being filled with material that is both personally and politically overtly hostile to him. Furthermore it

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[33] Some historical studies exist in America. See James Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); Francesca Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003).
[34] Ricardo Blaugh, 'Outbreaks of Democracy', *Socialist Register*, 36, (2000), pp. 145-160.
[35] David Armstrong and Edgar Waters, interview with David Armstrong (1986), National Library of Australia, no. 2462864.
[36] Papers of David Armstrong, National Library of Australia, MS 9363. Professor Alan Chalmers recalls a time where Armstrong was frustrated because he could not find for his collection a certain 'Strike Bulletin' published by the striking philosophy students and sent out students to search for it. However, the strike committee who published the 'Strike Bulletin' had in their haste simply skipped a number in their daily publication. Alan Chalmers, interview, 13 December 2010.

contains far more documentation on the Department of General Philosophy than the Department of Traditional and Modern Philosophy, where Armstrong was located following the partition in 1973.[37]

I have also used other archival collections such as the smaller personal collections of John Burnheim and Ann Curthoys. I have particularly made use of the collection recently deposited by Professor Frank Stilwell at the Sydney University Archives. The archive has a more celebratory tone with its very title, 'Records concerning the *struggle* to establish the study of Political Economy', reflecting a sense of pride in the movement itself.[38] The political economy dispute most closely matches the philosophy dispute in intensity and exceeds it in longevity, running from 1969 until 2008 when the department was finally set up within the Faculty of Arts. Due partly to the constraints of space and also in light of the recent publications on the political economy movement, I have not extensively addressed this dispute. Nevertheless, an exploration of this collection has aided my interpretation of the events surrounding the Philosophy Department. The collection includes documents which are directly relevant to the events in philosophy and also demonstrate a degree of cross over between activists, both in personalities and ideas.

Various other sources have been used such as the Senate and Professorial Board minutes. When exploring institutional disputes, it is easy to get lost in the minutiae of detail promoted by these official sources. Although these sources and the institutional perspective that they encourage is important, in light of the vast amount of documentary material available, including a variety of, leaflets, letters, official documents, broadsheets and other ephemera, it is both essential and possible to reconstruct what occurred 'from below' in order to complement the official institutional history. Newspapers and journals also provide valuable insight into the period, especially the student press, including, *Honi Soit* and *The Union Recorder*.

[37] Other collections on the Philosophy dispute are also in existence, such as the Michael Devitt collection, which is now in the possession of James Franklin. However, due to the abundance of material, this has not been used.
[38] S. 791, Records concerning the struggle to establish the study of Political Economy at the University of Sydney, 1973 – 2009. University of Sydney Archives.

I have supplemented this documentary and archival material with interviews of several key players in the philosophy dispute, including both staff and students. The interviews were conducted not to record the narrative or chronology, but rather to aid in the analysis and interpretation of documents and to ask questions where the archives are silent. The memories of former student activists, although vivid and layered with meaning, are often difficult to situate in relation to one another.[39] For these interviewees, the strike holds an important place in their memories and sense of self. The personal is now the historical. The prising out of memories was for some joyful and nostalgic, for others painful and embarrassing, but mostly characterised by a sense of deep ambivalence as to their idealism, which was not simply a result of their youth.[40] Interviewees were in dialogue with their own personal histories of the past, which occurred in such a formative time for many participants. I aim to tease out the underling historical assumptions and 'problematic' that underpinned the interviews.[41] At the conference, 'Return of the Repressed: Feminism in the Quad', Liz Jacka noted,

> I tried to figure out how to speak about this event in which I was supposedly a central character. I became quite preoccupied with the meta-question of what and how we remember, both individually and collectively, and the process of turning memory into history.[42]

The decades that have elapsed have led participants to clarify the meaning and significance of these events as they negotiate the difficult path that winds between memory and history. After conducting extensive archival research, the subtle or dramatic shifts that I observed in the participant's perception of these events become valuable in themselves. A nuanced appreciation of this process only aids historical understanding rather than hindering it.

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[39] Russell, Today the Students, Tomorrow the Workers!, p. 11.

[40] Oral history memoirs can help scholars uncover the linkages between different movements. Ret Eynon, 'Community in Motion: The Free Speech Movement, Civil Rights, and the Roots of the New Left', *Oral History Review*, 17, no. 1 (1989), pp. 39-69.

[41] This Althusserian approach was inspired by Ronald Grele. Ronald Grele, 'Movement Without Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems in Oral History' in Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998). See also Warren Susman, 'History and the American Intellectual: Uses of a Useable Past', *American Quarterly*, 16 (1964), p. 243

[42] Liz Jacka, quoted in Bashford, 'The Return of the Repressed: Feminism in the Quad', p. 52.

While there is often the danger of the interviewer imposing their own historical perspective when conducting interviews, I found that the traditional power structure of the interview was inverted. Writing as an undergraduate student, interviewing mostly senior academics, I was far more at risk of identifying with the greater knowledge and institutional seniority of the interviewee and having my own conception of history shaped by the interviewee's conception of the past.[43] Nevertheless, I have found oral history to be a vitally important component to my thesis, adding colour and sophistication to my understanding of the written sources.

This thesis is structured such that each chapter adds a layer of historical specificity and understanding. As it progresses, it narrows in focus in order to encompass the broad curve of history that led to the demands for student power at Sydney University. Chapter One will explore the rise of student movements in the 1960s, locating them in their intellectual and political milieu in order to gain a clearer understanding of their emergence. I will consider various explanations for student dissent, focussing on the emergence of student movement as a result of the shift in advanced capitalist countries to a post-industrial society. I will explore the emergence of student movements in Australia and Sydney University in particular. I will outline some key developments that were significant precursors to the more strident demands for democratisation of departments, faculties and other administrative bodies in the 1970s. I will argue that a shift in protest from extra-campus issues towards a focus on the authoritarian decision making structures of the university occurred and it is in this turn towards the university that the central demand for participatory democracy came to the fore.

Chapter Two will examine the theory of participatory democracy and what it entails in the university context. First, I will delve into the theory of participatory democracy, as it has been understood in relation to revisionist democratic theory. Secondly, I will explore the arguments put forward by students themselves and the refutations provided by the Professors. I will examine an important debate that occurred in the Government Department, as the Professors and Staff entered into a fruitful and

[43] This is the reverse of the situation outlined in Joan Sangster, 'Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History', *Women's History Review*, 3, no. 1 (1994), pp. 5-28.

honest intellectual dialogue as to the merits of formal equality between students and staff in the running of the department. I will not provide a conclusion as to the appropriateness of participatory democracy within universities, but rather seek to understand the complexity of the debate.

After examining the emergence of the demands of student power, and exploring their intellectual and contextual sources I will turn to how those ideas were realised in practice. Chapter Three will explore the democratisation of the Philosophy Department and the conflict which resulted when students and staff exercised their democratic rights. Firstly, I will examine the politicisation of philosophy in Australia and Sydney University in particular. Philosophy as a discipline was a contributing factor catalysing demands for participatory democracy. Secondly, the democratic legitimacy of the strike itself will be explored, focusing on the tension between democracy and feminism within the movement. I will conclude this study of participatory democracy in Chapter Four by examining the democratic functioning of the Department of General Philosophy.

I will argue that the student movement shifted in the early 1970s from broader social concerns towards a focus on the university as the target of discontent. In this process, the central demand for 'Student Power', that is, participatory democracy came to the fore. I will argue that the experience at Sydney University was a result of a complex interaction of causes that led students to gain a new consciousness and confidence in their aims and capabilities. Student movements evade simple analysis and were characterised by contingency, volatility and heterogeneity which problematises any abstract and generalised explanations for their existence. The consequence of this complex interplay was a radical experiment in participatory democracy which emerged at Sydney University. Although the movement collapsed, the fact that this democratic moment occurred at all is of greater surprise and resulted from a particular coincidence of causes in the social and political era in which it was embedded. Accordingly, it commands our historical and theoretical attention.

Chapter One

The Inexplicable Revolt

The Emergence of Student Movements in the 1960s

The Seeds of Discontent

Defining a student movement, although fraught with difficulties, is a useful heuristic exercise. Any attempt to analyse student movements must recognise that they do not conform to any grand narrative. Rather, the student movements of the sixties were deeply heterogeneous and volatile phenomena espousing contradictory aims and practices. Barry York, a former student activist at La Trobe University, defined student movements as 'a large group of students who regard the university as a legitimate focus for societal change.'[44] However, this basic definition can be problematised in several ways. One aspect concerns the orientation of student movements. Student movements could be directed towards a specific grievance or limited goal, such as ending the White Australia Policy. Alternatively, student movements could be revolutionary, concerned with broader ideological issues permeating society. A second dimension concerns the focus of student movements, which could be either focussed on campus-based issues or those faced by society as a whole.[45] While sociological distinctions may be useful tools in exploring student movements, they are at best an artificial matrix. Single-issue reformist movements often had a radicalising effect on students and seamlessly expanded into broader revolutionary movements. Similarly, campus-based disputes interacted with conflict outside the confines of the university.

Student movements are usually understood as political in nature and are associated with the emergence of the New Left, yet they were also concerned with social and cultural issues. The expressivist and aesthetic strand of the student movement and its nexus with the counter-culture was vital in sustaining

[44] Barry York, *Student Revolt!*, p. 12.

[45] Philip Altbach, 'Students and Politics', *Comparative Education Review*, 10, no. 2 (1966), pp. 175-187; Andrew Boggs, 'A Matrix for the Comparative Study of Student Movements: Twentieth Century Latin American, U.S. and Indian Student Movements', *Higher Education Perspectives*, 2, no. 2 (2006), pp. 39-49.

the movement.[46] The marriage of culture and participatory politics, especially over the issue of the Vietnam War, was crucial to sustaining the widespread popularity of student movements while also providing their distinctive style. Peter O'Brien, a leader of the Adelaide Students for Democratic Action, noted:

> As both a political and cultural phenomenon, the New Left has developed a more total revolutionary strategy, challenging at once the cultural and political hegemony of the dominant classes. Only the counter-culture can transcend the limits of a dominant culture by developing new values, new possibilities as well as new ways of social organisation.[47]

Students sought to redefine the very essence of what constituted the political in an imaginative and playful political choreography. This new sensibility is best encapsulated by the thought of German Philosopher Herbert Marcuse, considered the 'grandfather' of the international student movement.[48] Marcuse coined the term the 'Great Refusal' where students simply said 'no' and turned away from the prevailing social order, refusing to participate in the perceived continuation of their own oppression. This 'Great Refusal' included overtly political responses, but also took many 'weird and clownish forms', as alienated students sought to drop out of society altogether.[49] Many students turned to creative arts, drugs and music as a mode of spiritual enlightenment that sometimes worked in concert with collective action and sometimes against it. At the Arts Festival organised by the Australian Union of Students and held in Canberra in 1967, students marched towards the South

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[46] Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter-Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), p. 91; Graham Hastings, *It Can't Happen Here,* p. 9; Ralph Summy, 'Prolegomenon to Strategy' in Gordon, *The Australian New Left*, p. 261; Anthony Ashbolt, 'Hegemony and the Sixties: Observations, Polemics, Meanderings' *Rethinking Marxism*, 19, no. 2 (April 2007), pp. 208-220.

[47] Peter O'Brien, 'Mentors of the Student Mind: A Symposium on Intellectual Influences', *National U,* 4 August, 1969, p. 6.

[48] Stanley Aronowitz, 'The Unknown Herbert Marcuse', *Social Text,* 58, no. 1 (1999), p. 135. This was a title Marcuse vehemently rejected. 'Interview with Herbert Marcuse', *Australian Left Review* (December 1969), p. 36. First appeared in *Der Spiegel* (28 July1969).

[49] Martin Matustik, *Spectres of Liberation: Great Refusals in the New World Order* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 165. There were many personal responses by students which could either politicise or alienate students which could lead to either withdrawal or protest. Kenneth Keniston, 'Sources of Student Dissent' in Edward Sampson and Harold Korn, *Student Activism and Protest* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1970), p. 163.

African Embassy chanting, 'Free, free the Bourgeoisie – turn them on with LSD!'[50] Furthermore, the reciprocal role of individual and group identity within student movements must also be acknowledged. As Verity Burgmann notes, 'A symbiotic relationship exists between movement and participants: they make each other.'[51] Whether or not such inclusive practices were achieved, the community ethic within student movements was often as important as any substantial political gains. This interplay between political, social and cultural aspects is central to explaining the emergence of participatory democracy within student movements.

Any definition of a student movement immediately dovetails into an explanation of the sources of dissent. Gareth Steadman-Jones a British student activist, noted:

> A scientific explanation of the international student revolt must account for the specific concatenation of causes that have combined to produce it. There is no one master explanation of this phenomenon. On the contrary, mass student insurgency is *par excellence* an over-determined phenomenon.[52]

There is no single theoretical framework for understanding student movements and attempts to explain them mirrored the rise of the movements themselves. Few predicted the sudden explosion of dissent which occurred around the world. Out of the apathy of the fifties, the 'Great Refusal' simply didn't make sense.[53] Competing discourses, which sought to understand the student movement, sprang up

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[50] Graham Hastings, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 145.

[51] Verity Burgmann, *Power and Protest: Movements for Change in Australian Society* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993), p. 19. On the role of student movements in defining the identity of its participants (and vice versa) see Jack Whelan and Richard Flacks, *Beyond the Barricades: The Sixties Generation Grows Up* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); J. Cohen, 'Strategy of Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements', *Social Research*, 52, no. 4 (1985), pp. 663-716.

[52] Gareth Steadman-Jones, 'The Meaning of Student Revolt' in Alexander Cockburn and Robin Blackburn (eds.), *Student Power: Problems, Diagnosis, Action* (London: Penguin, 1969), p. 30.

[53] E.P. Thompson deemed the fifties the decade of great apathy. E.P. Thompson, 'The New Left', *Outlook*, 3, no. 6 (1959), p. 12.

both within the movement and outside it, often reflecting the sociological theories dominant in society at the time.[54]

The fundamental problem with most attempts to understand student dissent is that such explanations inevitably reflect a judgment made by the theorist or historian themselves. Student movements were an explicit ideological challenge to the ruling capitalist hegemony and contained their own logic and in-built justification for dissent. Hence, the stance taken by the historian is inherently prejudiced by their own ideological and moral judgment of student movements. American psychiatrist Seymour Halleck drew a perceptive distinction between 'sympathisers', who sought to discern the sources of student dissent in circumstances external to the students such as the Vietnam War, and 'critics', who sought to blame the students themselves.[55]

One of the popular explanations offered by critics was the 'Generational-Psychological' theory, which attributed student rebellion to oedipal-projected politics; the son's ideological acting out of the subconscious hatred for the father.[56] An alternative version considered students as having too many 'Spock marks,' referring to the permissive child rearing practices of the fifties.[57] The effect of these theories was widespread, with the Sydney University Vice-Chancellor, Bruce Williams, referring in his memoirs to his 'disdain for the Spock generation.'[58] These flawed single-cause hypotheses were

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[54]The following provide useful overviews of the various causes of student unrest. For Australian overviews, see: Frank Knopfelmacher, 'University Crisis' in Henry Mayer and Helen Nelson (eds.), *Australian Politics: A Third Reader* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1973), pp. 675-673; Barry York, *Student Revolt*; John Searle, *The Campus War* (New York: Work Publishing Co., 1971); Graham Hastings, *It Can't Happen Here*, pp. 7-13. For American overviews see: Julian Foster, 'Student Protest: What is Known and What is Said,' in Julian Foster and Durwood Long (eds.), *Protest: Student Activism in America* (New York: William Morrow, 1970); Philip Burgess and Richard Hofstetter, 'The Student Movement: Ideology and Reality', *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 15, no. 4 (1971), pp. 687-702; Seymour Lipset and Philip Altbach, 'Student Politics and Higher Education in the United States,' in Seymour Lipset (ed.), *Student Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 1967). One commentator noted that 'the interest in youth activism generated numerous theories intended to explain it as an historical development, a sociological phenomenon, a psychological process, or a manifestation of personality. So numerous are these "explanations" that there is probably one to suit virtually anyone who has an opinion about youth activism.' John Horn and Paul Knott, 'Activist Youth of the 1960's: Summary and Prognosis', *Science*, 171 (1971), pp. 977-985.

[55] Seymour Halleck, 'Some Hypothesis of Student Unrest', *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 50, no. 1 (1968), pp. 2-9.

[56] Lewis Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations: The Character and Significance of Student Movements* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), p. 8.

[57] Bruno Bettelheim, 'Obsolete Youth: Towards a Psychograph of Adolescent Rebellion', *Encounter*, (September 1969), pp. 29-42.

[58] Bruce Williams, *Making and Breaking Universities*, p. 115.

not only sexist, but failed to demonstrate why this patricidal urge was only just emerging in the sixties generation.[59] As Socrates suggests, student dissent is as old as teaching itself, yet the sixties were an historical caesura, ushering in the dawn of an era characterised by renewed forms of social protest, matched by a style and intensity hitherto unseen.[60]

Those who were sympathetic to student movements viewed protest as a moral response to injustice. American historian Howard Zinn cut to the core of the sympathiser/critic dichotomy, asking, 'Can we not reasonably assume that when an evil is severe enough it will stimulate thinking, feeling people to act against it?'[61] Christopher Rootes, a former Liberal club member of Queensland University, contends that there is a moral strain to student movements that makes them 'unamenable to explanation through characteristic liberal democratic modes of political analysis.'[62] However, while legitimising dissent, such responses do not adequately explain specific instances of unrest.

Dissatisfaction with psychological and reductionist explanations of student protest stimulated discussion which took social movements seriously as forms of political action.[63] The most enduring explanation viewed student dissent as a product of the structural shifts taking place in advanced

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[59] Barry York, 'Sources of Student Dissent: La Trobe University, 1967-73,' *Vestes* 7, no. 1, (1984), pp. 21-31. Moreover, empirical work has comprehensively demonstrated that far from rebelling against their fathers, many student radicals were consciously seeking to implement the liberal values of their parents. Murray Goot, 'Beyond the Generation Gap' in Henry Mayer, *Australian Politics: A Second Reader* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1969), p. 153; Joseph DeMartini, 'Change Agents and Generational Relationships; A Reevaluation of Mannheim's problem of Generations', *Social Forces,* 54, pp.1-16; Richard Flacks, 'The Liberated Generation: A Exploration of the Roots of Student Protest', *Journal of Social Issues*, 23, no. 3 (1967), pp. 52-53.

[60] This is not to deny the fact that continuities existed, both for the era in general and student protest in particular. However, segmenting the past into manageable units is useful for heuristic purposes and also recognises that the sixties were in fact qualitatively different. On the continuities, see: John Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000), p. 219; Clarke, *Aborigines and Activism*. Moreover, some historians have rejected segmentation, such as Eric Hobsbawm in his study, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1994).

[61] Howard Zinn, *The Politics of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 102. See also Noam Chomsky, 'In Defence of the Student Movement', *The Spokesman*, no. 9 (1971) reprinted in *Australian Left Review* (November 1971), pp. 2-11. Even a commentator as hostile to the student movements as Lewis Feuer concedes that student movements are uncommonly selfless and generous in their impulses. Lewis Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations*, p. 3. Kenneth Keniston, drawing on the developmental psychology of Erik Erickson to argue that protest was a moral response to external conditions 'Psychological Development and Historical Change', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 40, no. 4 (1970), pp. 577-592; James Geschwender, James Rinehart and P.M. George, 'Socialization, Alienation, and Student Activism', *Youth and Society*, 5, no. 3 (1974), pp. 303-325.

[62] Christopher Rootes, 'Student Radicalism: Politics of Moral Protest and Legitimation Problems of the Modern Capitalist State', *Theory and Society*, 9, no. 3 (1980), p. 475.

[63] Christopher Rootes, 'Student Movements' in George Ritzer (ed.), *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Sociology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Co, 2007), pp. 4864-9.

capitalist countries. Such an approach transcends the sympathiser/critic dichotomy and accounts for the linkages between student movements across the globe, as students were responding to significant events occurring in international capitalism, especially the Vietnam War.[64] At the heart of this view was the idea that industrial society was increasingly shaped by technology and was becoming 'post-industrial.'[65] The key to this post-industrial age is knowledge and its control occupies the same pivotal role in history as was accorded to capital in the industrial society. Accordingly, the university and students become the primary motor driving historical change.[66]

Celebrants of this post-industrial new age, such as American intellectuals Daniel Bell and Zbignew Brzezinksi heralded a new era of human development in which scarcity would be abolished.[67] This prosperity negates the imperative for ideological critique, leading to an end of ideology as the proletariat loses its *raison d'etre*. The student revolt was merely an historical sideshow, a Luddite rebellion, 'the guttering last gasp of a romanticism soured by rancour and disgust.'[68]

While accepting the dawn of a new era, students rejected the end-of-ideology assumptions of Bell and Brzezinski. Rather than being free from conflict, the post-industrial society had its own contradictions.[69] As Habermas surmised, 'In short, the new conflicts are not sparked by problems of distribution, but concern the grammar of forms of life.'[70] Dennis Altman, a lecturer in the Government

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[64] Lani Russell, Today the Students, Tomorrow the Workers!, p. 36.
[65] Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages; America's Role in the Techtronic Era* (New York: Viking Press, 1970); Dennis Altman, 'Students in the Electric Age' in Osmond, *The Australian New Left*, p. 128. See also John Docker's discussion of this essay in John Docker, "'Those Halcyon Days": The Moment of the New Left' in Head and Walters, *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society*, p. 300.
[66] A. Callinicos, *Against Post-Modernism: A Marxist Critique* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), p. 121
[67] Daniel Bell, 'Notes on the Post-Industrial Society', *The Public Interest*, no. 6 and 7 (1967). Zbignew Brzezinski, *New Republic*, 13 December 1967; Zbignew Brzezinski, 'America in the Technetronic Age', *Encounter* (January 1968).
[68] Daniel Bell, quoted in in Kenneth Keniston, 'Even the Affluent Are Restless', *New York Times Magazine*, 27 April 1969. Brzezinksi makes a similar point in Zbignew Brzezinski, 'Revolution and Counter-Revolution (But Not Necessarily about Columbia!)', *New Republic*, 1 June 1968, p. 25.
[69] The emergence of the New Social Movement School of thought is predicated on the insistence between the links between changes in social structure and social activism. Various proponents of this school, which has remained influential, can offer insight into the rise of the student movement. Alain Touraine, *The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Claus Offe, 'New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics', *Social Research*, 52 (1985), pp. 817-868; Alberto Melucci, *Changing Codes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[70] Jurgen Habermas, 'New Social Movements', *Telos*, 49 (1982), p. 33. Even the Marxian orientated Left were recognising the importance of culture especially through the work of Antonio Gramsci, who emphasised the

Department at Sydney University made similar observations in a seminal essay entitled 'Students in the Electric Age',

> The student revolt appears to be the assertion of a new set of values against the prevailing ones and can only appear where there has emerged the precondition for these values – of which affluence may be the key.[71]

The movement away from materialist to post-materialist concerns led to a silent revolution in values.[72] The values of the bygone age of frugality and diligence were superfluous in conditions of material abundance.[73] Students craved a sense of community and participation in an age defined by the bureaucratisation and centralisation of power. Moreover, conditions of affluence entailed that at least until the recession of 1973, Australian students could look forward to choosing between a range of well-paid professions and did not have to worry about unemployment.[74] Students, unlike academics, did not have the responsibilities of a family or the inhibiting demands of a career and were in a prime position to challenge the established order.[75] Furthermore, the contemporaneous emergence of a critical mass of students in a rapidly expanding tertiary education sector was a vital precondition for any meaningful revolt. For the first time in history, students constituted a small but significant proportion of the population.[76]

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ways in which the capitalist system maintains order through ideological hegemony. Gramsci's work was popularised by Alastair Davidson, *Antonio Gramsci: The Man, His Ideas* (Sydney: Australian Left Review Publications, 1968); Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith (eds. and trans.), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).

[71] Altman, 'Students in the Electric Age', p. 131.

[72] Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977).

[73] Altman, 'Students in the Electric Age', p. 132.

[74] Docker, 'Those Halcyon days', p. 303.

[75] Rootes, 'Student Radicalism', p. 478.

[76] P.H. Partridge refers to expansion of higher education as its 'democratisation.' P.H. Partridge, 'The Universities and Democratisation of Higher Education' in *The Defence of Excellence* (Adelaide: University of Adelaide, 1978), p. 10.

Dennis Altman's work reflected the influential thought of the American theorist of student movements C. Wright Mills and the aforementioned Marcuse.[77] Marcuse viewed 'the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colours, the unemployed and the unemployable' as better qualified than the proletariat to serve as the midwife of history.[78] Students in particular were seen as the proxy for the proletariat as 'the most advanced consciousness of humanity.'[79] Although some both within and outside the student movement rejected the decline of class as the fundamental explanatory category, students enthusiastically embraced their new status as an incipient intelligentsia accorded to them by both left and right theorists.[80]

The student revolt appears paradoxical, 'a revolt of the favoured against the system that increasingly favours them.'[81] Students were receiving education, the key to being knowledge-producers in the post-industrial society, and yet they rejected the implicit values associated with the increasingly commodified education. Students viewed the university as upholding and extolling the values of the previous era, of bureaucracy and hierarchy, and a social order that denies participation and collective decision making. As John Docker noted, 'Their first target of attack, then, is the university itself.'[82] In the eyes of students this is the substantively rational response.

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[77] C. Wright Mills, *Power, Politics and People* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1963); C. Wright Mills, 'The New Left', *New Left Review*, 5 (1960), pp. 18-23.

[78] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon, 1964), p. 200. However, this is an oversimplification of the thought of Marcuse who never entirely rejected the importance of the working class as the historical agent of the revolution. Graham Hastings, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 9; John Fremstad, 'Marcuse: The Dialectics of Hopelessness', *Political Research Quarterly,* 30 (1977), p. 80; Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 16; Interview with Herbert Marcuse, *Australian Left Review* (December 1969), p. 36; Ross Fitzgerald, 'Human Needs and Politics: the Ideas of Christian Bay and Herbert Marcuse', *Political Psychology*, 6, no. 1 (1985) pp. 87-108.

[79] Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, p. 203.

[80] Cf: Gareth Steadman-Jones, 'The Meaning of Student Revolt' in Cockburn and Blackburn, *Student Power: Problems, Diagnosis, Action*; Lani Russell, Today the Students, Tomorrow the Workers, p. 205. Verity Burgmann notes that the lack of any common relation to the means of production ultimately disqualified students from anything other than a minor role in a history, which is a 'history of class struggle.' Burgmann suggests that 'ironically the theoretical retreat from class has expressed precisely the class interests of those advocating that retreat.' Verity Burgmann and Andrew Milner, 'Intellectuals and the New Social Movements' in Rick Kuhn and Tom O'Lincoln (eds.), *Class & Class Conflict in Australia* (Melbourne: Longman Australia, 1996), p. 122.

[81] Altman, Students in the Electric Age, p. 131.

[82] John Docker, 'Those Halcyon Days', p. 291.

Rootes posited a useful platform to understand what motivated student dissent by relying on Max Weber's distinction between formal and substantive rationality.[83] The former is concerned with calculating and employing the best means possible to attain specific ends, while the latter is more concerned with ultimate ends, defined in grand Habermasian terms as the project of human emancipation. Rootes contends that the student movements of the late 1960s represented, however imperfectly, a mobilisation of just such a substantive rationality.[84] This distinction between substantive and formal rationality explains both the sources of student dissent and the issues that captured the imagination of the student body. Furthermore, it is also a means of understanding the movements' mode of internal organisation, which favoured egalitarian participation over instrumental success, emphasising the moral, symbolic or ritual aspects of protest. The manner by which students reached their ends was as important, if not more so, than the ends themselves. Participatory democracy was central in this process. As an alternative way of thinking and an attempt to build self-conscious critic-participants in life, it prefigured any attempts at structural change to the social order.[85] Moreover, the need for participation has grown rather than lessened in the post-industrial age, as the 'primary problems are of a non-material and non-quantifiable nature.'[86]

What this brief excursion into the sources of student dissent demonstrates is that even at the level of theory there is no single answer for the sudden explosion of student protest that occurred around the world. Although the post-industrial thesis overstated its central case, it comes closest to explaining the rise of student movements around the world. Students sought to control knowledge and use it not for material gain, but to build a more just and equal society. It is in this process that the fundamental tenet

[83] Christopher Rootes, 'The Rationality of Student Radicalism', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, 14, no. 3 (1978), pp. 251-258.
[84] Although Rootes recognises that the student movement did not represent the perfection of substantive rationality, he failed to emphasise that Habermas, who had an ambivalent view of the student movement, viewed the collapse of the Weberian distinction between purposive-rational and aesthetic-expression as a strategic and tactical error. Hence Habermas criticised the excesses of the student movement and its leader Rudi Dutschke as 'Fascism of the Left.' Mathew Specter, *Habermas: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 114; Jurgen Habermas, *Towards a Rational Society*, p. 46. Even Marcuse realised that power did not come from the stem of a flower and radical students must translate the millenarian and antinomian aspect of the Great Refusal into political action, sensing the danger of expressivism that renders itself unintelligible. Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (London: The Penguin Press, 1972), p. 7. Rex Mortimer referred to 'the substitution for one kind of repression for another characterised by political fanatics.' Rex Mortimer, 'Student Action out of Nihilism', p. 75.
[85] See Peter Wertheim, 'Whither Democracy?', *Dissent,* 24 (Winter 1969), p. 10.
[86] Terrence Cook and Patrick Morgan, *Participatory Democracy* (New York: Canfield Press, 1971), p. 13

of New Left theory, namely, participatory democracy, came to the fore, both in the demands for student control of universities and in the internal mode of organisation of the movement itself. In the remainder of this chapter I will examine how this occurred through an overview of student protest at Sydney University. Protest in this period was an important precursor to the strident demands posed in the Government and Philosophy Departments for participatory democracy in the early 1970s.

The Emergence of Student Power at Sydney University

Student dissent as it developed it the early 1960s was characterised by a moderation in both style and tactics. Moreover, the trap of thinking that all students were radical must not be fallen into. Nevertheless, the period saw a revival of politics at Sydney University out of the apathy of the fifties.[87] Indeed, the most successful student protest in the fifties was non-political: a sit-down on Parramatta Road following the death of a student pedestrian in 1956.[88] For leading Australian New Left theorists, Richard Gordon and Warren Osmond, 'What surprised observers at the time was a new spirit and enthusiasm about the role of the student per se in society.'[89] Students began to view themselves as the conscience of society and the harbingers of social change.

Issues raised by students were not the self-interested complaints of the materially deprived.[90] Rather, students were concerned primarily with various anti-racist campaigns both in Australia and overseas, including supporting Aboriginal rights and the U.S. Civil Rights movement and opposition to the White Australia Policy and Apartheid in South Africa. As German political theorist Frank Pinner noted, 'Students exhibit a special sensitivity and tendency toward conflict when issues of justice and

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[87] See Peter Coleman, 'The Student Generation', *The Bulletin*, 11 August 1962.
[88] Alan Barcan, 'Changes in Student Outlook', *Quadrant* (Summer 1956), quoted in James Spigelman, 'Student Activism in Australia', *Vestes,* 6, no. 2 (1968), pp. 107-108. See also Editorial, 'Student Action and Apathy', *Orbit*, 2, no. 3 (1962), p. 3 which takes issue with this characterisation of the fifties as being apathetic and Coleman's estimate of the 1955 Sydney Lights demonstration as an isolated, non-political protest.
[89] Gordon and Osmond, 'An Overview of the Australian New Left', p. 18.
[90] Christopher Rootes, 'Student Movements', p. 4865.

truth are involved',[91] and one is reminded of Hannah Arendt's observation that students, 'acted almost exclusively from moral motives.'[92]

In the early sixties student movements paid greater heed to official student representative bodies and their moderate leaders such as SRC presidents Michael Kirby and James Spigelman.[93] However, protests did occur. In March 1960, immediately following the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa, over one thousand students demonstrated in Sydney and nine students were arrested.[94] The high point of this period was the Freedom Ride by Sydney University students in 1965, organised by Student Action For Aborigines.[95] Ann Curthoys, assuming the role of participant-observer wrote later:

> More clearly than any other event, the Freedom Ride signified the shift from Cold war to the 'sixties'... with their willingness to confront authorities... the SAFA students were a harbinger of the New Left and the Student revolts of the second half of the 1960s.[96]

Despite the nascent perception of the special role of students, at this stage there was no unifying concept of student power. Michael Hyde, a student activist at Monash University described this early activity as 'tame, unsustainable, unselfconscious, unreal, merely "incidents."'[97] While various New Left theorists were providing a unifying theoretical critique, this had not developed into an overall consciousness. Such opposition would come with the advent of the Vietnam War.

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[91] Frank Pinner, 'Western European Student Movements Through Changing Times' in S. M. Lipset and P. G. Altbach (eds.), *Students in Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 90-91.
[92] Hannah Arendt, *Crises* of *the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), p. 203. See also Vladimir Ulyanov (pen name for Bill Thomas), 'Students as a Moral Force?' *Farrago*, 6 October 1961, p. 2.
[93] By the early seventies, the SRC was viewed as not representing radical student interests. 'Representative Body or Schoolyard Circus?', *Honi Soit,* 24 February, 1971.
[94] Warren Osmond, 'The State of Student Protest, II', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, 46, no. 8 (7 September 1967), p. 125.
[95] Gordon and Osmond, 'An Overview of the Australian New Left', p. 22.
[96] Ann Curthoys, *Freedom Ride*, p. 292. See also Jennifer Clarke, *Aborigines and Activism*, p. 12; Sean Scalmer, *Dissent Events: Protest, the Media and the Political Gimmick in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002).
[97] Michael Hyde, *It is Right to Rebel* (Canberra: The Diplomat, 1972), p. 6.

The Vietnam War was the primary catalyst in the radicalisation of students and universities, reanimating a public sphere which had atrophied during the Cold War.[98] Both ideologically and organisationally students gained first-hand experience in challenging the established patterns of power and the traditional means of contesting power.[99] Initially, student involvement in the anti-war movement was subsumed into pre-existing organisations outside the university and dominated by the 'old left' and the 'old new left'.[100] Effort was channelled into the 'proper channels' such as the Australian Labor Party aligned Youth Campaign Against Conscription groups which worked towards the election campaign of Labor leader Arthur Calwell.[101] There was a reciprocal affinity between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary politics, with Calwell calling for 'protests and demonstrations from one end of the country to the other.'[102] Early demonstrations were neither exclusively, nor even primarily student led.[103]

However, the Labor Party loss of the 1966 election to the Liberal and Country Party Coalition, which had been in government since 1949, was a demoralising blow to those who felt they could work within the parliamentary system.[104] A split occurred within the anti-war movement as the older generation of

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[98] John Murphy, *Harvest of Fear*, p. 140. Similarly Dan O'Neill wrote that 'Vietnam was the fire that burnt down the rotten framework of Cold war politics.' Dan O'Neill, 'The Rise and Fall of Radical Consciousness,' *Semper Floreat*, 46, no. 6 (20 May 1976).

[99] Peter Cochrane, 'At War at Home: Australian attitudes during the Vietnam years' in Greg Pemberton (ed.), *Vietnam Remembered* (Sydney: Weldon, 1990), p. 166.

[100] Paul Ham, *Vietnam: The Australian War* (Harper Collins: Sydney, 2007), p. 517. Ralph Summy 'Militancy and the Australian Peace Movement, 1960-1967', *Politics*, 5, no. 2 (1970), pp. 148-162. John Murphy, *Harvest of Fear,* p. 255. The old new left refers to the British New Left revolving around figures such as E.P. Thompson, John Saville and Christopher Hill. Rex Mortimer provides a useful overview of the differences between the Australian, British and American New Left in 'The New Left', *Arena,* 13 (1967), pp. 16-25. See also Warren Osmond, 'Oz Guide to the Left', *Oz*, no. 40 (August 1968), pp. 8-9 which distinguishes between 'the new new left', 'the old new Left', the old old Left', the 'old Left', 'the new old Left', 'the mad Left' and 'the far Left.'

[101] Murphy, *Harvest of Fear*, p. 211; Gordon and Osmond, 'An Overview of the Australian New Left', p. 6.

[102] *The Australian*, 10 May 1966, quoted in Summy, 'Militancy and the Australian Peace Movement', p. 155. For a discussion of ALP policy on the Vietnam War see Rick Kuhn, 'The Australian Left, Nationalism and the Vietnam War', *Labour History*, no. 72 (1997), pp. 165-167; and for the ALP response to the anti-war movement see Michael Saunders, 'The ALP's Response to the Anti-Vietnam War Movement: 1965-73', *Labour History*, no. 44 (May 1983), pp. 75-91.

[103] Rootes, 'The Development of Radical Student Movements and their Sequelae', p. 174. Ann-Mari Jordens emphasises the role of other groups apart from youth and students in the anti-war movement, such as the Save our Sons movement. Ann-Mari Jordens, 'Conscription and Dissent: The Genesis of Anti-War Protest' in Pemberton, *Vietnam Remembered*.

[104] Michael Saunders, 'Law and Order and the Anti-Vietnam Movement 1965-72', *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 28 (1982), pp. 371. Beer, *A Serious Attempt to Change Society*, p. 6. Gordon and Osmond, 'An Overview of the Australian New Left', p. 6; Murphy, *Harvest of Fear*, p. 157-9; York, *Student Revolt!,* p. 39; Docker, 'Those Halcyon Days', p. 304; For an opposing interpretation see: Clarke, *Aborigines and Activism,* p. 125.

pacifists still believed in the efficacy of electoral change, while students were enraged with both the loss of the election and the rightward shift of the Labor Party.[105] This left students 'free to repudiate the moderate tactics of their elder fellow-protesters, and take their politics into the universities.'[106] The response from student activists was largely unequivocal. Michael Hamel-Green noted that, 'During 1967, institutional policies congealed into one big consensus. Dissent through the normal channels had been programmed into the system.'[107] Humphrey McQueen emphatically stated that 'the only meaningful action is that which is consensus breaking. Only illegal acts can expose the injustices of the law.'[108] The loss of this election rendered the movement 'more radical, less directed and more student-centred.'[109] Students began to doubt the efficacy and legitimacy of representative democracy, insisting that democracy meant more than simply voting. Rather, students wanted meaningful participation and involvement in politics both local and national.

One of the immediate results of the 1966 election was the disintegration of the Labor aligned Youth Campaign Against Conscription groups, reflecting the sense of betrayal students felt towards parliamentary politics.[110] Out of this milieu of discontent, students active in the organisation Sydney Committee for Labor Victory formed the radical action group, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).[111] The Sydney chapter of SDS described itself as an organisation with no ideology:

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[105] Mick Armstrong, *1,2,3,4 What Are We Fighting For?*, p. 59. The President of the Association for International Co-operation and Disarmament (AICD) commented only a fortnight after the election that 'reliance must rest on the democratic process with a definite aim... the senate election in 18 months time.' A.G. H. Lawes, Report to the AICD Committee Meetings, 14 December 1966, quoted in Summy 'Militancy and the Australian Peace Movement', p. 159.
[106] Osmond, 'The State of Student Protest, II', p. 125.
[107] Michael Hamel-Green, 'Beyond Pity', *Australian Left Review* (April-May 1970), pp. 56-57.
[108] Humphrey McQueen, 'A Single Spark', *Arena*, 16 (1968), pp. 55-56.
[109] Don Beer, *A Serious Attempt to Change Society*, p. 3.
[110] Mick Armstrong, *1,2,3,4 What are we fighting for?,* p. 59; John Murphy, *Harvest of Fear*, p. 211.
[111] Rootes, 'The Development of Radical Student Movements and their Sequelae', p. 174. On the formation of Sydney SDS see Bob Neild and Chris O'Connell, 'Profile of an Activist,' *Honi Soit,* 18 March 1969; Mike Jones and Chris O'Connell, 'One view of the new left', *Honi Soit*, 5 April 1968.

> As an organisation SDS has no ideology. It operates as a federation of issue-orientated committees, each acting on its own action-programme, relating the particular project to the democratic-humanitarian-individualist philosophy.[112]

The Sydney SDS imitated American developments due to the importance it placed on the Port Huron Statement, the central manifesto of the American SDS and its central creed of participatory democracy.[113] As the Sydney chapter stated, 'Believing that excessive effort had been directed at perfecting democratic institutions and procedures, SDS is concerned to develop the democratic citizen.'[114] Although the Sydney chapter of SDS as an organisation had declined in importance in the university by the early 1970s, it helped articulate the ideal of participatory democracy and position it firmly in the minds of students as one of the central aspects of the New Left.[115]

If 1966 marked a turn away from electoral politics, 1968 marked a turning point in campus activism as connections were drawn between the existing political situation and universities. The immediate cause was not imitation of overseas events such as the student uprising in Paris, May 1968, but rather resulted from proposed amendments to the National Service Act that required universities to provide the government with information on the age and status of male students.[116] The mood of students is best memorialised by the image of Sir Roden Cutler, the Governor of New South Wales, being hit

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[112] Sydney University SRC Orientation week handbook, 1969 published by University of Sydney SRC, quoted in Rowan Cahill, *Notes on the New Left in Australia* (Sydney: Australian Marxist Research Foundation, 1969), p. 12. For further discussion and critique of the SDS ideology see Kevin Rowley and Terry Counihan, 'Radical Student Politics', *National U,* 17 March 1969, pp. 6-9; Henry van Moorst, 'A Reply to Pipedream Revolutionaries', *National U,* 24 March 1969, p. 12; Bob Connell, 'Radicalism: What's it all about?', *National U*, 14 April 1969, p12; Kevin Rowley and Terry Counihan ,'Pipe Dream Revolutionaries: a Rejoinder', *National U*, 12 May 1969.

[113] Indeed, Vice-Chancellor Bruce Williams, whose brother was Dean of Divinity at Yale was able to provide him with SDS literature such that he was able to distressingly often predict the demands of Sydney University Students. Williams, *Making and Breaking Universities*, p. 91.

[114] Sydney University SRC Orientation Week Handbook, 1969, p. 12.

[115] Participatory democracy is considered by most to be the most unifying aspect of the New Left, in praxis more than in theory. See for instance: Massimo Teodori, *The New Left: A Documentary History* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), pp. 34-47; Ret Eynon, 'Community in Motion', pp. 39-69; John Sanbonmatsu, *The Postmodern Prince: Critical Theory, Left Strategy, and the Making of a New Political Subject* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004), p. 29.

[116] Barry York, *Student Revolt!,* p. 8. Although these were ultimately not passed, the effect remained the same on students.

with a tomato when giving a speech.[117] In combination with an ongoing suspicion of 'cops on campus', an atmosphere of anti-authoritarianism prevailed alongside an increased desire for student control of their universities.[118]

The Vietnam War was seen by students not as an aberration from normal events, but as the most cogent example of the irrationality and inhumanity of capitalism.[119] In his account of the late 1960s as a 'time of hope', Donald Horne explained:

> Being 'anti-Vietnam' could seem to mean a great sharing of all kinds of other hopes for a better world; Vietnam was seen as a transcendent issue, sweeping all issues up into the one concept of 'the radical', so that those who were enraged by the slaughter in Vietnam would become enraged by so many other issues that they might lift their sights above mere reform to the belief that *the whole structure must be changed.*[120]

Students began to turn inwards to a consideration of the role of the universities in society, as reflected in their internal decision making structures from which they were quite obviously excluded. Cahill and Irving presciently predicted in 1968, 'Sooner or later the student movement is going to focus on the university, and eventually a movement for university reform will emerge.'[121] The following section will explore the development of student power at Sydney University and how students connected the discrete conflicts with a totalising critique of the university administration.[122]

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[117] Chris O' Connell, 'Anyone for Tomatoes?', *Honi Soit*, 26 February 1970; 'Professor O'Neil Details the May 1st Tomato Incident', *Honi Soit*, 1 May 1070, p. 2; Bruce Williams, *Making and Breaking Universities*, p. 89. Connell et al, *Australia First*, p. 355; Lani Russell, Today the Students Tomorrow the Workers!, p. 143; Armstrong, *1,2,3,4 What are we fighting for!*, p. 83.
[118] Bruce Williams, *Making and Breaking Universities*, p.82. See also: James Spigelman, 'The Mini Affair', *Honi Soit*, 3 September 1968, pp. 6-7. Graham Hastings, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 67.
[119] Peter Cochrane, 'At War at Home', p. 166.
[120] Horne, *A Time of Hope*, pp. 51-52.
[121] Rowan Cahill and Terry Irving 'The Student Mood: Sydney University', *Dissent*, no. 23 (Spring 1968), p. 19.
[122]Hannah Forsyth discusses several of the following moments amongst others in her forthcoming PhD: Hannah Forsyth 'God Professors and Student Ratbags: power, politics and the ownership of knowledge in the 1960s and 1970s', Draft Chapter, The Ownership of Knowledge in Higher Education in Australia, 2010.

The Humphries Affair

The Humphries Affair began as a dispute over library fines that were increased in April 1967 following the usual practice of not consulting the student body. The issue snowballed into a matter of student representation, described by Cahill and Irving as the 'paradigm of the student power question.'[123] Max Humphries, a post-graduate psychology student, founded the group Student Action for the Rights of Students (SARS), which organised a library sit-in on 6 April. Various issues were discussed including the fining system and student participation in university decision making. Humphries was arrested, but continued to distribute leaflets calling for another mass meeting. Humphries was charged by the Proctorial Board on 13 April for 'showing gross contempt of authority and inciting other to do the same' and suspended for a year.[124]

The period of protest that ensued over the perceived victimisation of Humphries was labelled by *Honi Soit* as 'The Seventeen Days that Shook the Campus.'[125] On 14 April, it was reported that one thousand students picketed the Vice-Chancellor's office.[126] On 20 April the Proctorial Board met again and reversed its decision, re-admitting Humphries on a good behaviour bond. Although beginning as a simple protest against excessive library fines, the Humphries Affair came to represent the rights of students to be consulted and participate in decisions that affected their study. The dispute marked the beginning of an almost continuous period of agitation for student representation at all levels of the university.

Free U

Rather than reforming existing structures, students and staff sought to take control of their education by creating an institution under their command.[127] The Free U movement reflected the constructive

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[123] Cahill and Irving, 'The Student Mood', 19-23. See also: Hall Greenland, 'A Short History of the Humphries Affair', *Honi Soit,* 3 October 1967; Bryan Harrison, 'The Fisher "Sit-Ins" of April 1967', *Vestes,* xi, no. 2 (1968), pp. 153-159.
[124] Cahill and Irving, 'The Student Mood', p. 22.
[125] Rowan Cahill, 'The Seventeen Days That Shook the Campus', *Honi Soit*, 5 April 1968, pp. 8-9.
[126] Cahill and Irving, 'The Student Mood', p. 22.
[127] Megan Jones has extensively discussed the manner in which the Free U and 'Academic Feminism' intersect in their mutual concern with institutionalised knowledge and the way in which each problematised authority in the context of that concern. Megan Jones, Remembering Academic Feminism*,* p. 45.

side of the student protest movement; students and staff were helping to make, not just break, the university. The Free U was an international movement that gathered local momentum in Sydney during 1967, when it was established primarily by Sydney University students and staff in a terrace house in Chippendale.[128] The Free U ran from 1968 until 1972, with a peak of 300 members during the summer of 1969.[129] As an experiment in radical education, it sought to provide a conscience for the 'mass university', rather than attempting to reform it from within.[130] It was a utopian vision which sought to reaffirm in theory and realise in practice the lost myth of the community of scholars.[131]

The Free U was characterised by cooperative pedagogical practices whereby 'all the people affected by decisions should have a part in making them.'[132] The Free U aimed to break down hierarchies:

> The Free University of Redfern and Paddington has no bosses and has no workers, has no staff and has no students, has no administration and no bureaucracy. It does have a lot of people who through courses and activities are trying to understand themselves and society.[133]

However, in practice the Free U was inevitably reliant on its proximity to Sydney University, with radical staff employed by Sydney University adopting more senior roles leading then post-graduate student Ann Curthoys to argue that 'essentially it was a university clique.'[134]

Despite its deficiencies, the Free U posed a challenge to the traditional university as the first working model of a participatory democracy which dealt primarily in the currency which had been the exclusive domain of the university: knowledge. Participants challenged the university's exclusive control over teaching and research, which favoured vocational and professional advancement. It

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[128] Terry Irving, 'The Free University', *Honi Soit*, 14 September 1967; Brian Freeman, and Bob Connell, 'Free University', *National U*, 4, no. 1 (1968); Bob Connell, 'Inside the Free U', *Honi Soit,* 19 April 1968.
[129] Connell et al, *Australia's First*, pp. 360-361.
[130] Terry Irving, 'The Mass University', p. 8.
[131] Rowan Cahill, 'Free University: Experiment at Sydney', *National U*, 29 September 1967.
[132] Bob Connell, 'Free Uni and the Student Movement,' *Free U*, 1 February 1969, p. 18.
[133]Free U, Weekly Newsletter, quoted in Connell et al, p. 359.
[134] Ann Curthoys, 'The End of Free U?', *Arena*, no. 20 (1969), pp. 35-40. See also, Hannah Forsyth 'God Professors and Student Ratbags', p. 3.

sought to liberate knowledge from hierarchies of competitive disciplines in order to work collectively through cooperative pedagogic practices.[135]

Furthermore, the Free U emphasised the importance of the university's role in society, demonstrating that the university was a legitimate focus for radical actions. The traditional university was viewed as complicit in the goals of the establishment since government funding implied and actuated inherently conservative government control.[136] The Free U demonstrated the view that changing the university was at one with changing society, and that there was a fundamental connection between conscription, changes in racist and sexist attitudes, and the reform of teaching and administration in the university.[137] The Free U was an important experiment that showed that students and sub-professorial staff could challenge the authority of academic disciplines as upheld by the 'God-Professors', and bring democracy to the university.

The Political Economy Dispute

The initial stages of the long running political economy dispute emerged in embryonic form in 1970. At the end of the previous academic year, two tutors, David Hill and Bill Waters, conducted a survey of student opinion on the economics curriculum introduced by the recently appointed Professors Warren Hogan and Colin Simkin. The survey revealed deep dissatisfaction with the prescribed curriculum, which had a heavy emphasis on micro and macro economics.[138] The following year, the two tutors failed to have their contracts renewed which students and staff perceived as discrimination and an attack on academic freedom.[139] This triggered the involvement of students who began

[135] Rowan Cahill et al, 'The Lost Idea', *Honi Soit*, 3 October 1967, p. 32.
[136] Indeed, following the Murray Report on University Finances in 1957, the Australian Universities Commission was founded in 1959 which led to a considerable increase in Commonwealth financing of tertiary education and its synchronisation with other sectors of the economy. Warren Osmond, 'Towards Self-Awareness' in Gordon, *The Australian New Left*, p. 213. See also John Playford, 'Big Business and the Australian University', *Arena*, 17 (1968-1969), pp. 8-15.
[137] Connell et al, *Australia First*, p. 361.
[138] S. 791, Records concerning the struggle to establish the study of Political Economy at the University of Sydney, 1973 – 2009. Folder 1. Survey of Economics Students, David Hill and Bill Waters, 13 February 1970. University of Sydney Archives; 'Waters Exposes Hogan-Simkin', *Honi Soit*, 18 March 1971; 'Waters Answers Simkin', *Honi Soit*, 1 April 1971; *Sydney University Calender*, 1970, pp. 926-927.
[139] 'Dismissed! No Reason Given', *Honi Soit*, 9 November 1970. Peter Westmore, 'Radicalising Economics: Behind the Wheelwright dispute at Sydney University', *Quadrant* (June 1975), pp. 36-39; Butler, Jones and Stilwell, *Political Economy Now!*, p. 6. Groenewegen, *Re-educating for Business*, p. 128. See also: Frank

protesting in support of the two 'sacked' staff members. The issue of curriculum changes, the nature of economics as a discipline, pedagogy and the authoritarian use of professorial power were combined into a single protest issue. The political economy dispute had myriad dimensions, but for present purposes, the aspect that is most relevant is the alliance of sub-professorial staff and students. While originating as a dispute between professors and junior staff, over the ensuing years it involved multiple generations of students. Both elements were necessary to the movement's success and student movements within the university must be reconceived as junior staff and student movements.

The Victoria Lee Case

During the height of the Moratorium movement, the 'Victoria Lee Case' captured the attention of the student body. Upon matriculation from school, Lee wanted to study archaeology and anthropology and although she received the requisite grades she had not studied maths, which was a prerequisite to study at Sydney University. Lee consequently enrolled at Macquarie on the understanding that she could transfer after a successful year. However, when she applied to study at Sydney University in 1970, she was told that the Professorial Board had amended the transfer by-laws without publication.[140]

Lee's particular case was melded into the more general issue of student representation on the Professorial Board and Senate.[141] 600 students occupied the administrative offices in Sydney's Main Quadrangle for three days in support of Victoria Lee and increased participation in university government and more transparent decision making by the Professorial Board and Senate.[142] As *Honi Soit* concluded, students felt that 'direct action by the student body is the only way to confront the administration as application through the proper channels has been refused.'[143] Students were making

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Stilwell, 'The Struggle for Political Economy at the University of Sydney', *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 38, no. 4 (2006), pp. 539-549; Evan Jones and Frank Stilwell, 'Political Economy at the University of Sydney', Brian Martin et al (eds.), *Intellectual Suppression: Australian Case Histories, Analysis and Responses* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1986).

[140] Victoria Lee, 'Letter to University of Sydney Senate', *Honi Soit,* 12 March 1970, p. 3.

[141] Percy Allen, the SRC President, wrote a letter to the Chair of the Professorial Board, citing the Victoria Lee Case as evidence for the need for student representation, which was reprinted in *Honi Soit*, 'Percy Allen Explains the Victoria Lee Case', *Honi Soit*, 12 March 1970, p. 6.

[142] Lee Case Statement', *Honi Soit*, 25 March 1970, p. 1.

[143] John Maddocks, 'The Case of Victoria Lee', *Honi Soit*, 19 March 1970, p. 6.

increasing demands on the administration to open up its remote and authoritarian decision making structures.

Seeing the Connections: The Turn Towards the University

The protests outlined above are by no means exhaustive. During the sixties, Sydney University was marked by successive protests bursting into the spotlight as others faded away.[144] However, what these disputes indicate is that despite the centrality of the Vietnam War as the central issue in the student movement from 1965-1971, students were increasingly questioning the running of the university and its place in society. This shift gathered momentum with the decline of Vietnam as a protest issue which opened up a space for new issues to capture the attention and energy of students. Even as the mass politics of the moratoriums rolled around, the decision to withdraw troops had been made by the Australian government. This diffused the symbolic heart of the protest movement which was reflected in the decreased levels of participation in the second and third moratoriums.[145] In the eyes of conservative commentators, 'having failed to effect change in society the activist students have now turned to their own universities, trying to terrorize them into setting themselves up as models of the totalitarian nightmare.'[146]

There is a deeper reason why this shift in focus occurred, resulting from the existence of a radicalised student consciousness uniting the disparate issues into a totalising critique. This critique is both of the university and society in which it was embedded, such that *the entire structure must be changed.* One of the central issues became the putative connection between imperialism in South-East Asia and

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[144] Lani Russell, Today the Students, Tomorrow the Workers!, p. 205; Mick Armstrong, *1,2,3,4 What are we Fighting For*, p. 43.
[145] Horne, *A Time of Hope*, p. 58*;* John Murphy, *Harvest of Fear*, p. 243; Langley, *A Decade of Dissent,* p.143.
[146] Patrick Morgan, 'Mentors of the Student Left: A Symposium on Intellectual Influences', *National U*, 4 August 1969. See also L.H. Pyke, 'Student Dissent or Try Trucking Today', *Vestes*, 15, no. 1 (1970), p. 2. Indeed, some radicals defined participatory democracy as a basis to undermine representative democracy, rather than to complement it. See Staughton Lynd, 'The New Radicals and "Participatory" Democracy', *Dissent*, XII, no. 3 (1965), pp. 324 – 333.

Australian society.[147] War was a metaphor for the technocratic rationality purveyed by all aspects of society. John Docker noted that:

> The New Left turned its attention to what imperialism abroad was doing to society at home. Australia might become like the USA, dominated by a military-industrial complex, and where the universities had become servants of this complex. Knowledge, which should doubt and question all power and be informed by universal values, was being used for repressive and possibly totalitarian ('Amerikan') ends: society as a military–industrial machine.[148]

However, there was an ambivalence displayed in the student press as to whether this link was made between the 'revolutionary struggle in Asia' and the 'repression and powerlessness of students within the universities.'[149] Gordon and Osmond contend that the discrete campaigns at Sydney University:

> …were never generalised into a critique of the university as an educational structure that mirrored the patterns of authoritarianism and hierarchy throughout society. The sociological links were not made... these campaigns developed as isolated events rather than as interconnected experiences within a heterogeneous movement for social change.[150]

It is difficult to assess the ideological consciousness of the student body. Utilising student publications is highly problematic as they privilege the perspective of those who were politically active and 'inevitably on the left and in no way represent the vast majority of students.'[151] Indeed, Gordon and

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[147] This was also discussed in The Port Huron Statement, quoted in Miller, *Democracy in the Streets*, p. 330. See Habermas, *Towards a Rational Society*, p. 34 for a theoretical argument against any facile connection.
[148] Docker, 'Those Halcyon days', p. 295.
[149] Rowan Cahill, 'Student Power', *Outlook*, 12, no. 4 (August 1968), pp. 6-9. See also the reply by Patricia Hewitt, 'Student Power', *Outlook*, 12, no. 6 (1968), pp. 14-15; Cahill and Irving, 'The Student Mood', p. 22.
[150] Gordon and Osmond, 'An overview of the Australian New Left', p. 32; 'Vietnam and Imperialism', *Honi Soit*, 1 May 1970; Warren Osmond 'Battling the Machine' in Henry Mayer, *Australian Politics: A Second Reader*, 1969; (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1969), p. 194.
[151] Gerard Henderson in 'A Symposium of Intellectual Influences on the student Left', *National U,* 4 August, 1969; Bob Birrell noted that 'We know something about the leaders of the student movement in Australia, but very little about their followers, or potential followers. Studies such as *The Australian New Left* have been able to cite little or no survey research on this issue. Bob Birrell, 'Student Attitudes to the left', *Arena*, no. 24 (1971), pp. 57-67.

Osmond's diagnosis is a rhetorical device that purposely exaggerates the problems of the Student Left so as to invite the audience to see the various connections between the discrete issues.

A second cause lay in the crisis in education that followed the rapid expansion of tertiary education in the sixties.[152] The crisis originates in the contradiction between the image of the university as a community of scholars cultivating intellect for its own sake,[153] and the reality of the 'Multiversity', as a servant of the economy and national growth.[154] This conceptual stress between the two models is apparent in the Murray Report (1957), which is steeped in the language of the community of scholars. This had all but disappeared in the Martin Report (1964), which viewed students merely as 'units of human capital'.[155] While the post-industrial theorists may have overstated their case for the centrality of knowledge, university planners were certainly cognizant of its importance.

Student dissent stems from the awareness of this contradiction as democratically socialised students became frustrated with universities perpetuating the rhetoric of the community of scholars.[156] American sociologist Edward Sampson noted:

> We sit upon the horns of the dilemma. As the university increasingly becomes a rationalized tool for producing essential human components for societal functioning, it seems that it must place students into a position of decreased personal power. Yet at the same time, it still seeks to instruct in the classical academic values of inquiry and critical thought. When the critical power is turned toward an examination of one's personally diminished ability to influence

[152] Michelle Arrow, *Friday onoOur Minds*, p. 98; Connell et al, *Australia First*, p. 110.
[153] John Henry Newman, *The Idea of the University* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931), p. 75.
[154] Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963). Although Sydney University did not display all the features of the multiversity and there was no dominant military-industrial complex, it was perceived to be heading in that direction. Connell et al, *Australia First*, p. 110.
[155] Warren Osmond, 'Towards Self-Awareness' in Gordon, *The Australian New* Left, p. 213. York, 'Sources of Student Dissent', pp. 21-31; York, Student Revolt!, p. 17.
[156] Various versions of this thesis have been offered. See Habermas, *Towards a Rational Society*, p. 22; *York, Student Revolt!*, p. 31.

> outcomes even in the narrow confines of the university, let alone to produce change in the larger society and world, something in the system must give.[157]

To use the language of the Frankfurt School, this crisis stems from the realisation of the incompatibility of two conceptions of rationality: critical and instrumental reason.[158]

It is difficult to evaluate this generalised, structural cause, which manifested at a personal level. As Osmond reflected on student consciousness, 'It remains the subject for empirical analysis and observation and for students, a question of introspection.'[159] However, the contradiction was picked up eagerly in the student press.[160] *Arena* editor, Geoff Sharpe, noted that while generally remaining in the background, in periods of conflict 'the authoritarian structures can impinge directly on the student's image of the self.'[161] David McKnight, a student in the Government Department who was active in the Sydney University Communist Club, wrote shortly after the philosophy strike:

> Unlike the moratoriums and black power, the philosophy strike was different: it was not injustice and oppression "*out there*" but right at the gut-level of student experience: doing a course, being lectured, and passing exams.[162]

Previous disputes bore little relation to the day-to-day experiences of students and were 'alienating and abstract (for *both* the radicals and the mass)'.[163] However, the philosophy strike appealed directly to students and hence could form the basis of a genuine mass movement for democratisation of

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[157] Edward Sampson and Harold Korn, *Student Activism and Protest* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc, 1970), p. 12.
[158] Osmond, 'Towards Self Awareness', p. 209.
[159] Osmond, 'Towards Self Awareness', p. 210.
[160] Some evidence for this crisis can be found in the student press. For instance, during the Philosophy dispute, Ken Brimaud, referring to the decision of the Professorial Board in rejecting the Feminist course noted, 'This decision seriously offends against the basic idea of a university as a single community of scholars and students jointly engaged, with freedom and dignity in the pursuit of higher learning. Instead it reflects intellectual oppression.' 'Sexism at S.U.?', *Union Recorder,* 53, no. 13, 28 June 1973, p. 177.
[161] Geoff Sharpe, 'Editors Note', *Arena,* 21, (1970), pp. 1-2.
[162] David McKnight, 'Succesful Uni Strike', *Tribune*, 5 August 1973.
[163] David McKnight, 'Successful Uni Strike'. See also Kevin Rowley, 'The Alienated Society', *Tribune*, 5 March 1969, p. 9.

universities. Peter King, a government student, similarly noted that previously university politics had looked 'predominantly outward' to issues of Vietnam, draft resistance and apartheid, 'Now we are beginning to look inwards at the very institution of which we are a part and applying the same analysis of oppression.'[164]

As students began to focus on the university there was much debate as to whether this was the legitimate target for discontent.[165] This is reflected in the ambiguity contained in the slogan 'Student Power', which was interpreted both expansively, as the power to influence society, and also as the more narrow power to determine the structure and content of their education within the confines of the university.[166] While students recognised the futility of 'socialism in one campus', they nevertheless looked increasingly towards the university as the legitimate target of their dissent.[167] At the heart of this turn towards the university was the call for participatory democracy.

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[164] There was also a Dr Peter King in the Government Department, which can cause some confusion, particularly in the following chapter on the Government department. Peter King, 'Self-Managed Education and Revolutionary Change', *Tribune*, 6 August 1973.

[165] Debate over the legitimacy of the University as the focus of discontent is captured in a series of articles in *National U*. Kevin Rowley and Terry Counihan 'Radical Student Politics: Some Critical Notes', *National U*, 17 March 1969; Harry van Moorst, 'Pipe Dream Revolutionaries', *National U*, 14 April 1969. See also Warren Osmond, 'Universities: The Critical Weakness,' *Analysis*, no. 2, 1968, p. 21. See also: Perry Anderson, 'Components of the National Culture', *New Left Review*, 50 (1968), pp. 3-4.

[166] Mike Jones, 'The Radical 200', *Quadrant* (July-August, 1968), pp. 22-24.

[167] Carl Davidson 'Campaigning on the Campus' in Cockburn, *Student Power*, p. 345. This phrase 'socialism in one campus' was also used commonly in the student press, particularly around the issue of 'departmental revolutions.' See Craig Johnston, 'Students or Staff: Who decides?', *Honi Soit,* 2 May 1973.

Chapter Two

Behind the Slogans

Participatory Democracy in the University

Quiet Demands for Democracy

In the early seventies at Sydney University, the sixties were by no means over. However, there emerged a new sensibility amongst students. The activism of the sixties provided inspiration, but also tempered expectations for democratic change. Despite the continuing radical rhetoric throughout the pages of the student press, students began to develop more coherent and limited demands for change within the university. In 1970, Rex Mortimer, a lecturer in the Government Department who wrote frequently in New Left publications, noted:

> Recently there has been a spate of press predictions that 1970 will witness something of a retreat on the university front, a decline in student militancy and a return to a more moderate and restrained style of protest and action.[168]

This shift continued throughout the early 1970s. Jack Hermann, the President of the SRC said in May 1973, 'There are no issues really this year – no obvious flagrant abuses of power as have sparked protests in the past. The reforms that we've pushed for in the past are filtering through now.'[169] However, Hermann failed to predict the philosophy strike that would rock the hierarchical power structures of Sydney University only a month later.

Students and sub-professorial staff wanted recognition of the inherent right of participation, as representation without acceptance of this basic position was considered invariably token.[170] Small

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[168] Rex Mortimer, 'Student Action Out of Nihilism', *Australian Left Review* (April-May 1970), p. 73.
[169] Jack Hermann, quoted in Elisabeth Wynhausen, 'Quiet Demands for Democracy', *The Bulletin*, 12 May 1973, p. 22-23.
[170] Andrew Bain, 'The Students Role', *Vestes,* 14, no. 2 (1971).

concessions on behalf of the administration like consultative committees were viewed as exercises in repressive tolerance.[171] While students were concerned with all levels of the administration, they turned primarily to the structures that immediately confronted them: departments and faculties. Tutors Jean Curthoys and Paul Roberts, central to the disputes in the philosophy and political economy respectively, noted

> We propose total decentralisation of authority, giving democratic departments with full staff and student participation the right to determine their own direction.[172]

This demand was contested countless times over the proceeding few years. David Armstrong, who exemplified the much-maligned 'God-Professor', surmised the crux of the issue:

> Behind the complexities of the detail, the central issue is very simple. Who should run our universities, and in particular who should run departments in the universities? The new prophets of participatory democracy say that everybody in an institution should have a theoretically equal right to determine the policies of that institution. Against this, I would argue that the educational situation is fundamentally inegalitarian. The teacher knows his subject and its standards and the student does not.[173]

Participatory democracy took on a novel dimension at the university, raising questions relating to the nature of knowledge, intellectual excellence and the authority of the subject. While both sides in this dispute recognised that the university was a unique institution, they came to drastically different conclusions as to how it should be governed. This chapter aims to step back from the immediate

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[171] Staff-Student Liaison Committees were established in most departments during this time see 'Staff-Student Liaison Committees', *University of Sydney News*, 30 June, 1971, p. 6. Margaret Power details the frustration of Staff-Student Liaison Committees felt by all involved in the Economics Department. S. 791, Folder 5. Margaret Power, Submission to committee appointed by faculty to consider and report on all matters relating to studies lecturers and examinations in the courses economics I,II,III,IV.

[172] Paul Roberts and Jean Curthoys, 'Staff-Student Control as a Viable Alternative', *Honi Soit*, 6 September 1973, p. 8.

[173] David Armstrong, 'Who Should Run Our Universities?', *Canberra Times*, 27 September 1972, p. 2.

politics surrounding the disputes at Sydney University in order to delve more deeply into the theoretical underpinnings of participatory democracy.

Although debated by countless students around the world and despite its centrality in universities, no single theorist or school of thought came to be centrally associated with the term.[174] This partly resulted from the fact that theoretical abstraction was anathema to students on the New Left, who defined themselves by a 'mood' or 'sensibility.'[175] Students decried ideology in light of their critique of both capitalism and communism in favour of building a radical movement in practice.[176] The lack of definition for the slogan 'participatory democracy' gave it resonance and allowed it to be interpreted expansively and elastically.[177] While this thesis emphasises the importance of situating ideas in their historical context, an investigation of the theoretical aspects of participatory democracy will aid our historical understanding.

Participatory Democracy in Theory

Theorists of democracy have always struggled to mediate between theory and reality. While Athenian democracy, the Paris Commune of 1871 or remote Swiss cantons are variously upheld as near-perfect models, history has not provided any examples of an ideal democracy. Furthermore, the idealised model would be inevitably contested. Australian political theorist Graham Maddox claims that since

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[174] Douglas Lummis similarly discusses the lack of a radical theorist of democracy. Douglas Lummis, *Radical Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 27. Theodore Roszak noted that '... if one believes in the validity of participatory democracy (and what other kind is there?), then it is little more than academic presumption to begin unloading a host of institutional schemes in the abstract... people in the process of changing their homes, neighbourhoods, cities, regions, who are most apt to know best what they need and what works. And if they don't know, they will only learn from failures... Their experienced judgment always counts for more than the most prestigious expert.' Theodore Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), p. 400.

[175] Cook and Morgan argue that many students are hostile to elaborate theorising at an abstract level, regarding abstractness as one of the chief defects of today's 'irrelevant' academic communities.' Cook and Morgan, *Participatory Democracy*, p. 21.

[176] The lack of theory behind the term 'participatory democracy' was criticised by the Marxist Left. Rowley and Counihan critique the intellectual poverty of SDS claiming that the 'lack of ideology' is really a thin mask for a poorly understood concept, 'participatory democracy', which they claim is a corporative as opposed to counter-hegemonic ideology. Despite sympathising with SDS' distrust of the Old Left, they view the 'non-ideological activism of SDS like boarding a train and without knowing what direction it is headed.' Kevin Rowley and Terry Counihan, 'Radical Student Politics', *National U*, 17 March 1969, pp. 6-9.

[177] James Miller refers to participatory democracy as remarkable for its *resonance*, its multiple layers of implied meaning, its *elasticity*, the ease with which it could be stretched to cover a wide variety of different political situations and its *instability*, a volatility caused by its myriad meanings and implicit contradictions it contains. James Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets*, p. 142.

the 1960s, the movement for participatory democracy has proceeded mainly on two fronts: the practical and the theoretical.[178] However, such a formulation obscures the manner in which theory is indelibly wed with practice.[179] Indeed, although Professor Albert Kaufman of the University of Michigan may have coined the term participatory democracy in the early 1960s, it was American Students for a Democratic Society leader Tom Hayden who gave it political currency and shaped its initial interpretation.[180] For Lewis Feuer, who wrote extensively on student movements, 'participatory democracy is the contribution of the New Student Left to political theory.' Yet, it was:

> Born of their meetings, small and large, where the speaker, heckler or chairman would feel that they had articulated in words what was trying to emerge from a long, often inchoate discussion. Suddenly the mass seemed inspired; words passed to action, the spontaneity of the mass broke through the formal paraphernalia of formal democracy with its parliamentary rules.[181]

Although it is vital to recognise this praxis, participatory democracy was also developed at a theoretical level. Participatory theory was developed as an antidote to revisionist democratic theory, which arose in North America in the mid-twentieth century.[182] Joseph Schumpeter, an American economist and political theorist, instigated the revisionist school by inverting the 'classical doctrine' of democracy by making the deciding of issues by the electorate secondary to the election of men (sic) who are to do the deciding. As empirical studies suggested that democracy did not live up to the classical ideal in advanced capitalist societies, rather than concluding that contemporary society was

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[178] Graham Maddox, *Australian Democracy in Theory and Practice* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1991), p. 88.

[179] David Held argues that the history of 'democracy' shows that there are conflicting interpretations of the meaning of 'democracy', David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), p. 1; Karl Rogers, *Participatory Democracy, Science and Technology: An Exploration in the Philosophy of Science* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 111.

[180] James Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets*, pp. 95 and 144. It is interesting to note that for Kaufman participatory democracy was not ever meant to replace representative institutions, but to enhance their vitality – thought that was lost on the New Left. This is more in line with Benjamin Barber's idea of 'thickening thin democracy', achieving 'strong democracy', through gradual process of increasing public participation in exiting institutions of representative democracy rather than dismantling them. Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[181] Lewis Feuer, 'Participatory Democracy: Lenin Updated' in Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations*, p. 408.

[182] Other labels have been given to this school of thought, including 'empiricist', 'descriptivist', 'capitalist', 'utilitarian', 'elitist' or 'oligarchic', 'realist' or 'proceduralist.' Maddox, *Australian Democracy*, p. 88.

undemocratic, the revisionist school contended the classical ideal was a myth.[183] Participation was viewed as an unrealisable and undesirable ideal. Schumpeter aimed to limit the decision making power of the electorate whom he viewed as irrational and 'incapable of action other than a stampede.'[184] Hence, Schumpeter arrived at his procedural definition of democracy:

> That institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote.[185]

In this definition the only participation required was voting to legitimise the rule of professional politicians. The revisionist school celebrated apathy and indifference as functional to the stability of the system, serving to limit and confine conflict.[186] If participatory democracy can be viewed as the counterpart or extension of socialist theory then the revisionist school can be equated with a capitalist and individualistic mode of understanding.[187] This vote-centric model views citizens as consumers, out to maximise the satisfaction of their wants by choosing between competing political elites.[188]

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[183] Graham Maddox, *Australian Democracy*, p. 83. Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, p. 2. However, far from being value-free, revisionists inevitably endorsed these empirical findings. Robert Dahl although claiming to be uninterested in the desirability of the American system concludes by stating that it 'appears to be a relatively efficient system for reinforcing agreement, encouraging moderation and maintaining social peace.' Robert Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1956), p. 149. See also Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man* (London: Heinemann, 1960), p. 403; John Playford, 'The Celebrants of Apathy', *Arena*, no. 13 (1967), pp. 10-15; Robert Wolff (ed.), *Political Man and Social Man: Readings in Political Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 10. Finally, as Karl Rogers notes, 'the facts of political life' are little more than Schumpeter's Whiggish interpretations of the status quo.' Karl Rogers, *Participatory Democracy, Science and Technology*, p. 17.

[184] Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1942), p. 283. See also Walter Lippman, *The Phantom Public* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1925).

[185] Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democratic Theory*, p. 269.

[186] Bernard Berelson, Paul Lazarsfeld and William McPhee, *Voting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 316; Robert Dahl, *Preface to Democratic Theory*; H. Eckstein, 'A Theory of Stable Democracy', in *Division and Cohesion in Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 225-288; Giovanni Sartori, *Democratic Theory* (New York: Praeger, 1965); Quentin Skinner, 'The Empirical Theorists of Democracy and Their Critics: A Plague on Both Their Houses', *Political Theory*, 1, no. 3 (1973), pp. 287-306.

[187] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe hold that 'anti-capitalism is an internal moment of the democratic revolution. Socialism is merely one step in a wider project of radical democracy.' Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, 'Post-Marxism Without Apologies', *New Left Review*, 166 (1987), p. 103.

[188] John Dunn, *Western Political Theory in the Face f the Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 20; John Plamenatz, *Democracy and Illusion* (London: Longman, 1973), p. 164.

Participatory democracy arose as a reaction to revisionist theory which stripped democracy of its radical essence.[189] Although participatory democracy has been interpreted in various ways, at its heart lay several core tenets. Most crucially, the decision making process is decentralised and decisions are made by those who are affected by those decisions. It involves a dispersion of hierarchies, bringing authority closer to those who are affected by it and privileging the involvement of 'amateurs' over 'elites'.[190] Decision making is continuous, through consensus, rather than by vote, direct rather than through representatives and organised around issues, not personalities.[191]

Carole Pateman, a lecturer in the Government Department at Sydney University, made a crucial contribution to democratic theory in her seminal publication, *Participation and Democratic Theory,* which formed the basis of subsequent academic discussion of participatory democracy. Pateman endeavoured to revitalise the essence of democracy by reintroducing the classical ideals of Aristotle, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Stuart Mill. Participation is valued for instrumental reasons as it produces better decisions for the community and protects individuals from the tyranny of the political class. However, above all, it is valued as an educational experience for those directly involved in the making of decisions.[192] Participation aids in development of moral and psychological capacities, producing publically spirited citizens. Participatory democracy is thus self-sustaining, described by Pateman as 'a feedback loop between output and input' as participation fosters the betterment of the democratic process, developing the citizen's pre-existing capacity for rational deliberation.[193]

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[189] Immanuel Wallerstien also recently questioned how it was possible that democracy had changed from a revolutionary aspiration in the nineteenth century to a universally adopted, though empty slogan in the twentieth century. Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Leonardo Avritzer 'Introduction' in Boaventura de Sousa Santos (ed.), *Democratising Democracy: Beyond the Liberal Democratic Canon* (London: Verso, 2005), p. xxxiv.

[190] Cook and Morgan, *Participatory Democracy*, p. 4.

[191] C. George Benello and Dimitrios Roussopoulos (eds.), *The Case for Participatory Democracy: Prospects for Democratising Democracy* (New York: Black Rose Books, 2005), p. 5.

[192] Nancy Roberts, 'Public Deliberation in an Age of Direct Citizen Participation', *The American Review of Public Administration*, 34, no. 4 (2004), p. 323; Cook and Morgan, *Participatory Democracy*, p. 7.

[193] Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 43.

It was not an aversion to conservative theory that inspired student demands for participatory democracy.[194] Rather it was the *same* conditions of advanced capitalist society with its minimal potential for meaningful participation that led both to a resurgence of participatory democracy in theory *and* the alienation of students in the political sphere. In Australia, it was the lack of control students felt as citizens that epitomised these feelings, especially following the federal election in 1966. Students, who saw the mismatch between their democratic values and 'facts of political life' did not recalibrate their ideals, but instead sought to reorientate society by demanding control of the decisions that affected them.

Nonetheless, intellectuals and their ideas did play a role in the development of student dissent.[195] While it may be a coincidence that Carole Pateman was a lecturer at Sydney University, her work was widely read by students and encouraged the movement for student power.[196] Indeed, many outspoken activists on the left, including Warren Osmond, Terry Irving, Rex Mortimer, Dennis Altman, Anne Summers and Liz Fell were young academics in the Government Department at this time. Student movements must be reformulated as 'Staff-Student' movements in opposition to the administration and 'God Professors'. These academics represented the convergence in political philosopher Antonio Gramsci's thought of the 'traditional', ivory-tower intellectuals in the academy and 'organic' intellectuals, created by the movement itself.[197]

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[194] Indeed Pateman noted that 'it is rather ironical that the idea of participation should have become so popular, particularly with students, for among political theorists and political sociologists the widely accepted theory of democracy (so widely accepted that one might call it the orthodox doctrine) is one in which the concept of participation has only the most minimal role.' Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, p. 1. Similarly Rowley and Counihan note, referring to Seymour Lipset, 'This [participatory democracy] is a sort of back to J.S. Mill movement and what it ignores is how and why unbeknown to them bourgeois democratic theory has moved from the concept of an active and unformed citizenry to that which argues that democracy is not only or even primarily a means through which different groups can attain their ends or seek the good society, it is the good society itself in operation.' Rowley and Counihan, 'Radical Student Politics', p. 7.

[195] Within the American student movement, James Miller's *Democracy in the Streets*, emphasises the role of intellectuals, particularly C. Wright Mills and Arnold Kaufman. Ret Eynon refutes this, contending that his oral interviews demonstrate that the moment was influenced more by direct experience, rather than theories and ideas. Ret Eynon, 'Community in Motion', pp. 39-69.

[196] John Playford's article is another example which demonstrates that these revisionist democratic theories were being discussed in various popular journals. John Playford, 'The Celebrants of Apathy', *Arena*, no. 13 (1967), pp. 10-15.

[197] Gramsci wrote that 'the popular element "feels" but does not always understand or know, the intellectual element "knows" but does not always understand and in particular "feel."' Cited in Dan O'Neill, 'Abstract and Real World Intellectuals and Radical Social Change' in Gordon, *The Australian New Left*, p. 267.

Theorists and activists, who were often one and the same, discovered and influenced each other. There was an 'elective affinity' between intellectual ideas and radical politics.[198] As Verity Burgmann notes:

> Intellectuals do not invent liberating ideas and impose them on people who then form social movements; rather, intellectual trained people are important in articulating and embellishing ideas that are being worked out in practice, in and by the movement themselves.[199]

Ideas were one source amongst many of student and staff dissent. This reflected New Left theory itself, which privileged the role of intellectuals in societal change. Intellectual mentors helped students articulate their demands for democratisation of universities, providing the language of dissent that allowed students to verbalise their demands that were bred of personal experience. The following section will explore how students and junior staff in the Government Department at Sydney University articulated these arguments for participatory democracy.

The Democratic Breakout: Theory and Practice

Although 'departmental revolutions' were attempted elsewhere in Sydney University, the Government Department was distinctive in the explicit manner in which students, staff and the professors explored the intellectual underpinnings of participatory democracy. During June and July 1973, as the unfolding turbulence in the Philosophy Department was radicalising the campus, debate in the Government Department over democratisation reached its zenith. The debate was part of the larger struggle going on throughout the university as students reacted against the remote and authoritarian role of the administration, including the Professorial Board, the University Senate and the Vice-Chancellor.

[198] The notion of 'elective infinity' is derived from Michael Lowey who argues that, 'it is not the 'influence' of these thinkers that explains the spirit of 1968, but the other way round: the rebel youth looked out for authors who could provide ideas and arguments for their protest and for their desires. Between them and the movement there was, during the 1960s and the early 1970s, a sort of spiritual 'elective affinity': they discovered each other and influenced each other, in a process of reciprocal recognition,' Michael Lowey, 'The Revolutionary Romanticism of May 1968', *Thesis Eleven*, 68 (2002), p. 96.

[199] Burgmann, *Power and Protest*, p. 7.

Government students recognised the department was by no means free floating, but bound by hierarchical by-laws.[200]

In early June 1973 students presented the two Professors in the department, Dick Spann and Henry Mayer with a petition demanding the right to participate and vote at departmental meetings.[201] Both professors opposed this and Mayer responded with a lengthy essay, which became the framework for the debate over democratising the department. Mayer launched some well-versed critiques of participatory democracy, claiming 'the direct democracy demand is deceptively simple – it sweeps away all the difficulties by the simple process of ignoring them.'[202] Mayer dismissed the parallel between the university and the political sphere 'conventionally defined', believing it to be a false analogy that students were like citizens and staff the governing elite.[203] While Mayer was not against participation per se, he found it imperative to look at the purpose or aims of an institution, as different models may be better suited to particular situations.

Students were not satisfied with Mayer's arguments and in the midst of continuing exchanges of open letters, the professors agreed to an open student-staff workshop to be held on 8 June in the Professorial Board Room.[204] The very inversion of the more commonly used 'staff-student' term indicates the

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[200] These by-laws were being assessed by the Senate at this time. Proposals for Reorganisation in University Government, *University of Sydney News*, 5, no. 7, 9 May 1973.
[201] I have not been able to locate this petition in the various archives, although multiple references to it in other sources provide ample evidence as to its basic demands. Henry Mayer claimed that 'The demand of the petition is for full participation and voting rights for all students in the department and all staff at all departmental meetings.' Henry Mayer, A Comment on the Petition: Full Version, June 1973, Burnheim Papers. Moreover a leaflet noted that 'half of all government students signed a petition which lead to a number of joint staff-student workshops.' S. 791, Folder 2, Democratisation, Where Did it Get Us?
[202] Henry Mayer, A Comment on the Petition, p. 3, Burnheim Papers.
[203] Ibid, p. 2.
[204] There is some contention about these dates. Groenwegen claims that following the staff-student workshop, reported on the 8 June, 1973, 'Mayer subsequently produced a long document commenting on the subject of greater student participation in departmental decision making, in which he defended his well-known pluralistic and anti-authoritarian stance.' Groenewegen, *Re-educating for Business*, p. 154. However, a summary of Mayer's main points was created, which is dated 8 June, presumably so those who attended could have a brief of Mayer's views before the workshop began. Henry Mayer, A Comment on the Petition: Summary, 8 June 1973, Burnheim Papers. As Mayer's arguments, which are given in the long essay are debated at the workshop itself, it appears that the essay pre-dated the workshop. This view is confirmed by an undated leaflet which claims, 'Most students by now would have seen Henry Mayer's Discussion on the Petition. The whole debate has taken on an increased urgency with the forthcoming staff-student workshop on Friday next (the 8th) to be held in the professorial boardroom. See S. 791, Folder 2, What would democratisation mean: An Answer to Professor Mayer.

seriousness of student demands: students were to come first. Rex Mortimer noted that this was 'not a struggle between a bunch of fun loving ratbags and a despot.'[205] Although opposing the petition, Mayer placed himself on the side of the petitioners in recognising that what lay at stake was neither a joke, nor purely symbolic, but a real question of politics and power.[206] It must be noted that both Mayer and Spann wrote extensively on government institutions and democratic procedures. Both professors held respect for students and there was an element of intellectual playfulness in debating these ideas. This is demonstrated by the fact that they conducted such a meaningful workshop at all, where participatory democracy was not only the object of discussion but also the means by which the workshop was conducted.

The student-staff workshop was a microcosm for these debates going on throughout Sydney University and universities throughout the world.[207] The following analysis will explore the central issues that were debated at the workshop and in other exchanges that followed. While many voices and varied arguments were put forward, the debate coalesced around several core issues.

Intellectual Excellence

At the core of the argument against student power made by the professors was the notion that the university must uphold certain standards of intellectual excellence. Underpinning this argument was the view that not all institutions can run on the same lines, but rather that their mode of organisation must pay heed to the institution's purpose and aims.[208] The concern of universities was to maintain, transmit and advance certain bodies of knowledge. Teachers understood the demands of their subject

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[205] Rex Mortimer, Student-Staff Workshop: 8 June 1973, p. 8, DMA, 6, 16.
[206]Henry Mayer, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 1.
[207] Joseph Califano, an American theorist sponsored by the White House, travelled the world in order to examine the university problem. Califano reported, 'The demands of Sorbonne or Rome students mirror those of our own: more control over courses; more control over administration; more control over faculty – more control. The rebel student considers representative democracy a failure. Radical students in France and elsewhere argue for some kind of utopia where everybody votes on everything that affects them.' Joseph Califano, *The Student Revolution: A Global Confrontation* (New York: Norton, 1970), pp. 23 and 72. See also George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston: South End Press, 1987), p. 126. For an Australian discussion see the thematic edition of Vestes, 'Who should run our Universities?', *Vestes*, 14, no. 2 (1971).
[208]Similar ideas were expressed by Sydney Hook, one of the greatest critics of the student movement. Noting that neither an army, nor a symphony orchestra, nor a family with small children can function through participatory democracy, 'One man, one vote, from professor to janitor, is more in keeping with an intellectual pogrom than with a dedicated search for truth.' Sydney Hook, 'Authority Freedom and Academic Anarchy', *Survey* (October 1968), p. 69, reprinted in *Quadrant*, 15, no. 6 (1971), pp. 42-8.

in a way that students did not. Hence, the university was fundamentally inegalitarian and justifiably authoritarian.[209] However, when pressed to explain exactly what intellectual excellence entailed, Professor Spann was ambiguous, stating that 'intellectual excellence is not an orthodoxy to be communicated to students, but certain standards which are easily corrupted and hard to maintain.'[210] Henry Mayer was more strategic, inverting the students' anti-capitalist rhetoric:

> I cannot but reject the notion of the academic as a tap turned on by 'customers'. What a thoroughly capitalist and consumer-oriented notion it is... It would mean the end of the autonomy of learning as a principle.[211]

According to this logic, refusing to recognise the inequality between the learner and learned was a denial of academic freedom and thereby, student freedom.[212] A small number of students did express some sympathy with this logic.[213] As Martin Krygier argued, 'to deny the superior competence of staff would cheat students in an intolerable way of much that is most valuable in education.'[214] Students were amateurs in the real sense – they made mistakes and lacked the skills that only come from experience and devotion to the subject.

This perspective garnered quite a hostile reaction from the majority of students and sub-professorial staff at the workshop. The charge of 'amateurism' cut to the heart of the participatory project. Although students recognised that professors had greater knowledge, they did not see why this was incompatible with realising a more cooperative form of departmental decision making.[215] Rex Mortimer argued that Spann's position misconstrued the relationship between standards of excellence and the demands for student participation, as students were not asking for the right to teach the subject, only to make policy decisions. Mortimer appealed to the deliberative aspect of participation,

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[209] Spann, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 6.
[210] Spann, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 13.
[211] Henry Mayer, A Comment on the Petition, p. 6.
[212] Bob Birchall, 'Freedom and Authority', *Vestes*, 14, no. 2 (1971), pp. 132-137.
[213] Klaus Cordeus, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 6.
[214] Martin Krygier, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 3.
[215] Peter King (student), Student-Staff Workshop, p. 3.

arguing that the involvement of students would raise standards of excellence, because staff would be faced with an active obligation to account for both their teaching content and methods of teaching.[216]

For students and sub-professorial staff, participation was appropriate and essential in running the university. As Pateman asked, 'Why, in a democratic society, does democracy stop at the gates of factories, universities and other organisations?'[217] Students believed that they would be able make better decisions regarding their education. At a practical level this meant control over course and curriculum. To this end, participatory democracy was instrumental; students would produce better decisions, just as Rousseau argued that participation would protect citizens from the dangers of tyranny.[218]

Debate concerning the authority of the subject did not play as pivotal a role as it would in the philosophy and political economy disputes. This was due to the fact that the Government Department was relatively liberal, pluralist and peaceful.[219] It was not riven by the divisive and antagonistic battles over curriculum and teaching which characterised the disputes in the Philosophy and Economics Departments.[220] For the latter especially, the nature of economics itself was the fundamental driver of the political economy dispute, sustaining it long after the radicalism of the sixties faded.[221] Hence, demands for participation within the Government Department were less urgent, as democracy was seen as an ideal worth instituting rather than as an instrumental vehicle to create immediate change.

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[216] Rex Mortimer, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 8,
[217] Carole Pateman, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 6.
[218] Carole Pateman, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 6.
[219] Wynhausen, 'Quiet Demands for Democracy', p. 23.
[220] Sue Willis recalls that the department was quite receptive to new ideas, and before 1973 it had held a staff-student colloquia on women's liberation. Henry Mayer authorised a course on the family taught by Anne Summers and Liz Fell. Moreover, as a whole the department was very supportive of Dennis Altman, Lex Watson and Sue Wills who were openly and publically visible, gay activists in Sydney. Sue Willis, 'The Philosophy Strike: The View From the Department of Government', *Australian Feminist Studies,* 13, no. 27 (1998), p. 64.
[221]Indeed for 'radical' economics lecturer, Gavin Butler, intellectual excellence, defined as the authority of the discipline is self-replicating, 'as there is a systematic bias in the judgements of an older man. Unless he is accountable in some way to younger practitioners of his discipline, his judgments will be self-reinforcing as the students he judges to be academically excellent also become practitioners.' S. 791, 2, Dr Gavin Butler, Submission to Mr Justice Hope, Chairman of the Special Committee of Enquiry established by the Senate of the University of Sydney.

However, Government student and student journalist David McKnight did oppose the 'active and passive distinction in learning', with knowledge being passed on from scholars to the students.[222] McKnight's approach reflects the educational theory of Paul Goodman, Ivan Illich and the widely read Paulo Freire.[223] The concept of democratisation was intimately tied up with notions of de-schooling and cooperative pedagogies. The self-managed university was aimed at freeing knowledge from educational hierarchies that replicated the oppressive order. Schooling was viewed as complicit with a capitalist mode of understanding, an educational instrumentality and form of social control. Peter King, a student in the Government Department argued:

> If the philosophy of education implicit in the professorial power situation is accepted then learning is simply programming, something that is done to you, an essentially *authoritarian* activity. One of the fundamental aims of staff-student control is to end authoritarian control which straightjackets real learning and to break down the teacher/student, active/passive roles and to promote education as critical, cooperative dialogue – an activity which is done *by* learners, not *to* them.[224]

Students wanted to embark on their own journey of intellectual discovery in partnership with their professors, but on their own terms. However, by refusing to have their education dictated to them, they also came close to rejecting the more positive sides of the liberal humanist tradition of education that was particularly strong at Sydney University.

Formal Authority and Voting Rights

At the workshop, debate revolved around the vexed issue of the legal authority vested in the professoriate through the university by-laws. Professor Spann made the pragmatic point that it was absurd to talk about Mayer as a sort of dictator as he had showed the greatest reluctance to become

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[222] David McKnight, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 4.

[223] See Paul Goodman, *Community of Scholars* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962); Ivan Illich, *Education Without Schools* (London: Souvenir Press, 1973); Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Penguin Books, 1972).

[224] Peter King, 'Self-Managed Education and Revolutionary Change', *Tribune*, 6 August 1973.

Head of the Government Department, only acquiescing to the Vice-Chancellor's request because of Spann's illness.[225] However, students were not concerned with Henry Mayer as a person, but as a symbol of power.[226] Students refused to rely on the benevolence and wisdom of professorial power, keenly aware how it was being used to overrule students and staff in the Philosophy Department.

The central claim put forward by students, indeed the only one they could agree on, was for formal and equal voting rights.[227] In light of the importance placed on consensus in participatory democracy, rather than aggregation of votes, this emphasis appears odd. However, for students, participation and voting were two sides of the same coin. Without such power, discussion would be sterile. As one student noted:

> Workshops turn into talkshops. The only real alternative is being involved in exercising power and the only real power is one person, one vote, one value: self-management.[228]

Pateman believed participation on various committees to be of more importance than 'mass voting', yet agreed with student demands for formal equality, believing it to be a necessary precondition for participatory democracy and the final arbiter, if consensus did not emerge. While differential voting, which would give weighted votes to students, junior staff and professors was proposed, it did not gain much traction due to its symbolic and practical denial of the equality of participants.[229]

Professors Spann and Mayer pointed out that voting implied the right of students to instruct staff if there were irreconcilable differences of opinion. Indeed, one student suggested that he saw no reason

[225] Spann, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 6.
[226] Phillip Ascot, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 4.
[227]Dennis Altman, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 5.
[228] Wertheim, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 2.
[229] Cliff Fogerty, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 4. For a longer discussion on differential voting in academic decision making structures see Christian Bay, 'Academic Government and Academic Citizenship in a Time of Revolt' in Edgar Litt (ed.), *The New Politics of America Policy: A Reader* (New York: Holt, 1969).

why students could not in fact hire and fire staff.[230] This was the most extreme claim made by students and gained no support from staff who viewed it as incompatible with academic freedom.[231]

The professorial veto was seen as the pinnacle of de jure power, which cast a 'stultifying shadow' over the effective running of the department.[232] Several students demanded an elected and rotating departmental headship and could not see why the choice should rest with the Vice-Chancellor.[233] This conflict demonstrates the limits of democratisation in one department, which would emerge most markedly in the philosophy disputes.

Mayer made two further points against equal voting rights. Firstly, that democratisation improperly divides rights and responsibilities, 'In plain English, if something goes wrong, the head cops it.' Spann felt that he could not properly exercise responsibility as head of department without the right to veto decisions that appeared contrary to the best interests of the department. Secondly, Mayer argued that student participation in the establishment of courses involved the possibility of grave injustices to a future set of students by the present set of students. Yet as one student pointed out, 'The question is, whether this is worse than the head deciding everything. Are there not now dangers of injustice to future students?'[234] This argument returned to the issue of intellectual excellence. Students believed that they were capable of making worthwhile decisions regarding academic policy.

Cliques

The issue of unrepresentative cliques and caucuses dominating participatory meetings became the most important issue in the philosophy disputes and was heavily discussed at the workshop. American feminist Jo Freeman has referred to this as the 'tyranny of structurelessness', whereby ostensibly structureless meetings were 'a smoke screen of the strong or the lucky to establish unquestioned

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[230] Michael Hurley, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 7.
[231] See Charles Frankel, 'Student Power: The Rhetoric and the Possibilities,' *Saturday Review*, 2 November 1968, pp. 23-25.
[232] Dr Peter King, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 7.
[233] Peter King (student), Student-Staff Workshop, p. 3.
[234] S. 791, Folder 2. Peter King (student), A reply to HM, Jun 19, 1973.

hegemony over others.'[235] Mayer put forward a similar view, arguing that techniques which claim to foster 'democracy as participation' may in fact increase elitism and hierarchy and also only integrate those 'below' more firmly into the lowest rungs of the hierarchical system. Rather than being an educational experience, Mayer viewed the likely outcome of the petition to be the formation of a set of new coalitions and elites.[236]

Students contested this claim at the level of both democratic theory and practice. Students pointed out that fear of 'elitism' is inherently hypocritical, as it was the only mode of governance with at least the potential for democratic rule.[237] King also noted that any clique would be committed to its own self-destruction in a democratic arena, as it could simply be voted out. Students pointed to the democratic functioning of the Philosophy Department, noting that cliques had not formed but rather that elitism and apathy could be overcome by the experience of participation, which would lead to increased responsibility and accountability in decision making.[238] Students also addressed more practical techniques to minimise the emergence of cliques, such as by advertising the time and place of meetings.[239]

Apathy and Education

While students were intent on instituting participatory democracy in the department for instrumental reasons, namely, to produce better decisions, the educative role of participatory democracy was also emphasised. In the spirit of John Stuart Mill, involvement in decisions would aid students' moral and intellectual development and complement their education:

[235] Jo Freeman, 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 17 (1972), pp. 151-165. See also Cathy Levine, 'The Tyranny of Tyranny', *Black Rose*, no. 1 (1974).
[236] Henry Mayer, A Comment on the Petition: Full Version, p. 4. Burnheim Papers.
[237] Philip Ascot, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 4.
[238] S. 791, Folder 2, Peter King (student), A reply to HM, 19 June 1973.
[239] Peter Wertheim, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 2.

> What more fitting role for a Department of Government than to invite its students to directly shape their scholarly destinies by joining in an open political process with staff? Let the operation of the discipline become a political experience of the disciples.[240]

Students reflected the view that the electorate was not inherently incapable of decision making, but rather that those capacities must be learned, which would only be gained by direct experience of participation. As Dennis Altman noted, staff treatment of students was a self-fulfilling prophecy. Apathy and boredom at meetings could not be concluded to have resulted from the students' lack of motivation, but rather may be a symptom of the fact that they do not have the right to participate meaningfully.[241] Indeed, the 120 people who attended the workshop seems testament to the fact that apathy can turn instantly to productivity when given the opportunity to flourish.[242] Students believed that participation would maximise the chances of alleviating alienation and apathy, reflecting the New Left vision and shared hope for a more cooperative community.

Repressive Tolerance

The student-staff workshop represented the high point in the struggle for democratisation in the Government Department. The workshop ended with Professor Mayer acknowledging that the conditions in the department were 'shithouse.'[243] It was resolved by the chairman that students would formulate detailed policy and constitutional proposals. However, momentum dissipated and government students instead directed their energy into the emerging philosophy strike.[244] The movement for democratisation within the Department of Government failed to ignite mass student protest and captured little attention in the student press. This resulted partly from the fact that there

[240] S. 791, Folder 2, Peter King (student), A Reply to HM, 19 June, 1973.
[241] Dennis Altman, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 5. This view directly mirrors the arguments between the revisionist, empirical theorists and the participatory school discussed above.
[242] Craig Johnson, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 5.
[243] Mayer, Student-Staff Workshop, p. 13.
[244] Peter Groenewegen presents a brighter picture, arguing that students and staff were striking over the philosophy dispute, and that a draft constitution was submitted to the department in late July and a consultative agreement was agreed upon in 1974. Groenewegen, *Educating for Business*, p. 156. Similarly, a leaflet produced in 1975 which gave a brief history of the Political Economy Dispute noted that, 'Mayer lost control of his department in 1973. It is now jointly run by staff and students, each member of the 52 person committee (26 staff, 26 students) having one vote (including Mayer). S. 791, Folder 10. Steve Keen, Birds of a Feather.

was no substantive issue involved, but also demonstrates the unpredictability and contingency of student movements.[245]

However, Government students were quick to realise the importance of the philosophy strike and its impact on the entire university. On 25 June 1973, 10 students signed a leaflet entitled 'Who decides?' urging Government students to attend Pateman's lectures which would be turned over to Jacka and Curthoys for discussion on the role of women in the university.[246] The leaflet insisted that:

> The issues involved go beyond the institution and teaching of a particular course. To staff and students who have been pressing for increased participation in departmental decision making, rejection of a staff-student sponsored decision by the professorial board represents a threat to the autonomy of a department AND the arts faculty. With the strong possibility of a Government Dept. achieving democratisation such a precedent could threaten decisions we make. Even without participation, democratic decisions can be overruled by a body dominated by the 'nuts and bolts of this university: bloody engineers, medicos, horse doctors and agriculturalists.

At a Government Department meeting attended by 300 people on 27 June, 168 students and staff voted in favour of striking and 165 against.[247] Later that day an extraordinary meeting was held by the Government Department staff, which called on the Professorial Board to reverse its decision not to appoint Jacka and Curthoys to teach the proposed course on feminist thought.[248] A strike bulletin published the same day noted that the entirety of the Government Department was on strike except for

[245] Barbara Caine, *History at Sydney,* p. 69. The History Department was similarly wracked by disputes that challenged professorial authority between 1973 and 1975, yet similarly did not capture much attention in the student press.
[246] Who decides?, 25 June 1973, DMA, 6, 24.
[247] Sue Wills, 'The Philosophy Strike: The View from the Department of Government', p.65.
[248] Motions Passed at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Government Department Teaching Staff, 27 June 1973. See also Notes on the Deputation of Three Striking Government Department Staff, Anne Summers, Terry Irving and Peter King, 28 June 1973. Burnheim papers.

Professors Spann and Mayer and two other members of staff. This constituted more staff on strike than in the Philosophy Department itself.[249]

Shortly thereafter, thirteen staff members of the Government Department issued a statement confirming that they were striking over the Professorial Board's rejection of the feminist course rather than the issue of democratisation in their own department. Rather, they had 'high hopes of resolving current debate over the structure of the Government Department in agreement with its head.'[250] This statement indicated that a split was occurring between students and staff in the Government Department over both the aim of democratisation for their own department and the tactics used to achieve that aim.[251] The Government staff did not want students to promulgate the idea that they were striking for democratisation in both the Philosophy and Government Departments. Rather, they emphasised that it was due to the sexist and authoritarian decision making of the Professorial Board.

Without staff support, the movement for democratisation of the Government Department dissolved. Students were not granted equal standing with staff on departmental matters. An anonymous letter circulated to all staff does much to recreate the prevailing atmosphere:

> We, the nasty radicals of the Government Department, humbly pray your forgiveness of the gross ingratitude we have so callously demonstrated since last Friday when, in your infinite wisdom (or intellectual excellence?) you decided that it would be tactically appropriate to leave us for dead... Please accept this, our petition for your pardon, and teach us again the

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[249] David Armstrong, 'Fission at Sydney University', *The International Council on the Future of the University Newsletter*, 11 (1975), pp. 1-14.

[250] Statement by striking Government Department Staff, 5 July 1973, Burnheim Papers.

[251] Craig Johnson noted that 'the big failing of the campaign [in the Government Department] has been the lack of support from staff.' Craig Johnson, 'Students or Staff; Who Decides?' *Honi Soit,* 2 May 1973. Similarly, David Armstrong noted that 'one fairly well-known but very important political point has emerged once again in the course of both the Economics and Philosophy disputes. Radical students without the support of some members of staff are relatively powerless in a university. But when radical staff and students combine, they can form very powerful pressure groups in current university disputes and struggles.' Armstrong, 'Fission at Sydney University', p. 14.

> wonderful and mysterious ways of elitism, and we will be forevermore, Your humble servants, The nasty radicals. P.S. Fuck th' lotta yez![252]

Government students were disheartened by this anti-climax in their own department and felt betrayed by 'back-peddling and back-stabbing' staff. Students felt that once previously supportive staff realised the logic and implications of their action, they fell silent.[253] The students learnt not to trust staff, who they felt used the students' agitation to achieve certain moderate reforms in their favour.[254] This reflected a 'frequent tension', which Dennis Altman later noted, 'between movement influenced and more conventionally-orientated intellectuals, tensions which often played out in disputes within universities.'[255] A leaflet entitled, 'Democratisation – Where Did It Get Us?' sought to give some answers and solace to those who felt they had failed,

> It all began with the demands for student and staff to have voting rights of equal value, at general meetings. Half of all government students signed a petition which led to a number of joint staff-student workshops. Those fizzled out, after endless debates over a draft constitution: whether or not to compromise with paranoid staff. At least it's better to have struggled and been defeated than never to have struggled at all.[256]

The struggle was viewed as valuable in itself. Failure was an intensely radicalising experience for a community that held mutual cooperation and democracy as not only a means to an end, but also as an end in itself.

The aim of this section has not been to produce a narrative of the protests that occurred in the Government Department, but rather to explore the arguments put forward by students for participatory

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[252] To all staff, DMA, 6, 20.
[253]S. 791, Folder 3, Democratisation: Where Did it Get Us?
[254] This view of distrusting staff was common amongst students. Chris Connell wrote earlier, 'To clear up the role of staff in the conflict, briefly put, they cannot be trusted. They have careers and promotions to protect.' Chris O' Connell, 'Anyone for Tomatoes?', *Honi Soit,* 26 February 1970.
[255] Dennis Altman, 'The Personal is the Political: Social Movements and Cultural Change', in Brian Head and James Walters, *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 314.
[256] S.791, Folder 3, Democratisation, Where Did It Get Us?

democracy. Yet the student-staff workshop itself can be considered almost a paradigm of a ‘democratic breakout.’ It serves as a useful introduction to the intellectual arguments for participatory democracy, which were fielded at the level of concrete experience, rather than abstract expression. As Ricardo Blaug writes:

> If the break-out of democracy becomes extended in time and spreads to the institutions of power, the question of institutional design emerges as a problem in the realm of action. In times of revolution, participants must become theorists and try to design democratic institutions themselves.[257]

The next chapter will turn to the main disputes in the Philosophy Department, which captured the broad attention of the students at Sydney University, in order to assess how participatory democracy operated in the realm of action.

[257] Blaug, Ricardo, ‘New Theories of Discursive Democracy: A User's Guide’ *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 22, no. 1 (1996), p. 67.

Chapter Three

Philosopher Kings and Student Citizens

'Plato's conclusion that philosophers ought to be absolute rulers is ill-drawn even in the domain of a Philosophy Department'[258] – George Molnar

'They seem to want to substitute the God-Department for the out-worn God-Professor. I am against there being any Gods in a University.'[259] – David Armstrong

Politicisation of Philosophy as a Discipline

The radicalisation of philosophy as a discipline in the sixties made it particularly susceptible to student demands for democratisation. Philosophy in Australia has a long history of politicisation, partly a legacy of Australia's most influential philosopher, Challis Professor John Anderson. Anderson was an outspoken figure who delved into a number of social and political debates. Anderson's thought was broadly anarchist and libertarian in flavour, yet almost dogmatic in its own belief in the smashing of societal dogmas.[260] However, the intellectual winds of change ushered in by the sixties established a new era of radicalisation that became divisively institutionalised in the academy.[261] The idea that philosophy and politics could not be divorced became increasingly prevalent. Three key moments had a crucial impact on what subsequently occurred at Sydney University.

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[258] George Molnar, 'Speech to the Aristotelian Society', *Honi Soit*, 14 September 1972.
[259] David Armstrong 'Letter' to *Nation Review*, 10 September 1972,
[260] John Anderson, 'The Servile State' *Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy*, 21 (1943), pp. 115–132; Grave, *A History of Philosophy in Australia*, pp. 66-69; Eugene Kamenka, '"Australia made me"... but which Australia is mine?', *Quadrant*, 34, no. 10 (1993), pp. 24-31; Peter Harris, 'John Anderson's Legacy, *Quadrant,* 43, no. 12 (1999), pp. 11-18. James Franklin suggests that without John Anderson, the sixties would have had an entirely different character. Paul Crittenden 'The Religion Report', *ABC Radio National,* 7 April 2004, Transcript available at [http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/relrpt/stories/s1086186.htm].
[261] John Burnheim and Paul Crittenden provide a useful overview of the intellectual currents underpinning this radicalisation in their forthcoming work 'Political Polarisation in Australasian Philosophy in the 1960s and Their Aftermath.'

The first of these moments occurred when Professor Sydney Sparkes Orr of the University of Tasmania was forced to resign from his chair, having been accused of seducing a student.[262] Following a Royal Commission and High Court case for wrongful dismissal, the Australian Association of Philosophy black banned his chair, with many perceiving the dismissal as a case of academic persecution and a denial of natural justice. The Orr case was debated in every philosophy department in Australia; 'A line had been drawn and philosophers were constrained to take sides in what was seen as a political issue.'[263]

The second moment occurred at Sydney University in 1964 when a vacancy opened up for the lectureship in political philosophy.[264] Frank Knopfelmacher, an outspoken anti-communist and polemicist applied for the position but was rejected by the Professorial Board, which deemed him unqualified for the specific appointment. This rejection was interpreted by Armstrong, who had backed Knopfelmacher, as being based on Knopfelmacher's political views.[265] The Knopfelmacher case contributed to the growing polarisation in the department between radical and conservative parties and emphasised the interplay between politics and philosophy.

Philosophers were also becoming radicalised by events such as the Vietnam War, responding not simply as individuals, but as philosophers. The third moment was sparked when Flinders University Philosophy Department underwent the 'Red Shift.' Under the Headship of Professor Brian Medlin, senior staff including S.G. O'Hair, Rodney Allen and Ian Hunt, became converts to Maoist Marxism.[266] This inspired radicals at Sydney especially when Medlin addressed the 1970 Annual

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[262] Cassandra Pybus, *Gross Moral Turpitude: The Orr Case Reconsidered* (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1993); Grave, *A History of Philosophy in Australia*, p. 107.
[263] Burnheim and Crittenden 'Political Polarisation in Australasian Philosophy in the 1960s', p. 8.
[264] Robert Scoble, 'The Knopfelmacher Case', *Quadrant*, 15, no. 5 (1971), pp. 72-82. A.K. Stout, 'On University Appointments: Thoughts After Knopfelmacher', *Minerva*, 4 (1965-66), pp. 55-72; David Armstrong and R.N. Spann, 'The Knopfelmacher Case', *Minerva*, 3 (1964-65), pp. 538-55; 'Dr Knopfelmacher – Five Views' *Quadrant*, 9, no. 4 (1965), pp. 69-80; Donald Horne, 'The Organization Dons and Dr K.', *Quadrant*, 9, no. 3 (1965), pp. 5-6. Connell et al, *Australia's First*, p. 165; Grave, *A History of Philosophy in Australia*, p. 209.
[265] Connell et al, *Australia's First*, p. 166. Rayment argues that Armstrong believed that a radical member of staff, Wal Suchting, deliberately sought 'dirt' on Knopfelmacher from sources in Melbourne and presented this to the Professorial Board in order to block Knopfelmacher's appointment and ensure his own political interests in the department. Rayment, The Philosophy Split, p. 9.
[266] Burnheim and Crittenden 'Political polarisation in Australasian Philosophy', p. 8; David Hillard, *Flinders University: The First 25 Years* (Flinders Press: Adelaide, 1991), p. 57.

Conference of the Australian Association of Philosophy held at Sydney University while clutching Mao's Little Red Book and draping a red flag replete with a clenched fist over the lectern. Despite Armstrong's objections, the second professor of philosophy at Sydney University, Charlie Martin, successfully moved that:

> The council of the AAP is of the opinion that the U.S. and Australia are engaged in a senseless and inhuman struggle in Indo-China and affirms that Australians are justified in opposing Allied military involvement in the Indo-China War and conscription for that war by non-violent acts of civil disobedience. [267]

Motions calling for the democratisation of Australian philosophy departments were also debated.[268] Armstrong and David Stove perceived Sydney University to be in the 'pre-Flinders' stage of politicisation.[269] Armstrong viewed this conflict of philosophers as part of a wider conflict within the university that was threatened by the New Left.[270] Armstrong's views on the Vietnam War also reflected his procedural position on democracy:

> Because there seems to be some great wrong, you are not therefore entitled to put aside democratic procedures... on any key moral issue which is also political, you must work through the democratic process. If you feel deeply about conscription and you lose... then bad luck.[271]

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[267] 'Notes and News', *Australian Journal of Philosophy*, 48, no. 3 (1970), p. 420.
[268] David Armstrong, A Case Against the Motion, DMA, 6, 7; Letter from Peter Herbst, Chairman of AAP to Armstrong, DMA, 6, 7.
[269] David Stove, 'In Defence of Mr Santamaria, and against the politicisation of philosophy departments', a talk given to the Aristotelian society, 29 September 1970. DMA, 5, 10. Reprinted in *Honi Soit*, 29 October 1970.
[270] ABC Radio Program, 'Fact and Opinion' hosted by Peter Fry, 2 May 1971, discussion between David Armstrong, Dean Barnett, Brian Medlin and Greg O'Hair, DMA, 5, 21; Graham Williams, 'Under the Red Flag' *The Australian*, 16 December 1970.
[271] Graham Williams, 'Philosophers At War', *The Australian*, 18 December 1970, pp.10-11. Armstrong's views were counterbalanced within the Philosophy Department by the second Professor, Charles Martin, who believed that 'to have kept silent would have been a crime.' Similarly Martin's replacement the following year, Graham Nerlich, was reported as saying that to hold a class on the moratorium day was a political act and that his classes agreed with him by voting against holding classes on the day of the moratorium. 'Protest Boycott by Students', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 June 1971.

This politicisation and polarisation within philosophy went deeper than immediate political alignments and radicalisation of individuals who were contingently philosophers. Rather, it reflected divisions between philosophers *qua* philosophers. This crisis in philosophy revolved around the questions pertaining to the nature of reason and what philosophy should be concerned with.[272] John Burnheim noted that one of the major conflicts in Australian philosophy was between 'those who maintained the traditional quest for atemporal theory and those who sought an explicitly historically situated understanding of human thinking and practice.'[273] Burnheim adopted a historicist perspective whereby 'the philosopher, must take a position that rests not on ultimate truths, but on a reading of our specific historical situation.'[274] Conversely, Armstrong believed that:

> The idea advanced first by the bourgeoisie and now by the New Left is that philosophy should come out of the clouds and be of immediate relevance. I think this is against the spirit of philosophy and an attempt to politicise it. Philosophy needs a great deal of detachment from immediate concerns – it would be better to study the Peloponnesian War than the Vietnam War.[275]

This dichotomy of philosophical and political views is of course a gross simplification as many people held combinations of different views. Nonetheless, the divisions between philosophical method and political view were mutually reinforcing and contributed to an increasing politicisation and polarisation of philosophy. This process became dramatically apparent at the University of Sydney.

A Divided Department

There was barely a time when the Sydney University Philosophy Department was not disturbed by conflict in the years preceding the split in 1973. The coincidence of a radicalised student body as

[272] 'What Kind of Philosophy?', *Honi Soit*, 30 September 1971, p. 4.
[273] John Burnheim, 'A History of Philosophy in Australia', *Critical Philosophy*, 2, no. 2 (1985), pp. 108-113. See also Richard Campbell, 'Doing Philosophy Historically', *Critical Philosophy*, 2, no. 2 (1985), pp. 5-21.
[274] John Burnheim, 'Profound Crisis in Philosophy', *University of Sydney News*, 8, no. 25, 11 October 1976. See also *University of Sydney News*, 8, no. 27, 25 October 1976 and *University of Sydney News,* 15 November 1976 for responses to Burnheim's article.
[275] Graham Williams, 'Philosophers at War', *The Australian*, 18 December 1970, pp. 10-11.

outlined in Chapter One and a politicised and polarised discipline combined to create a revolutionary fervour that would not be sated by piecemeal reforms by the university administration. Two disputes in particular were important precursors leading to the strike in 1973.

In 1971 two lecturers Wal Suchting and Michael Devitt proposed a series of courses entitled 'Marxism-Leninism', which included the ideas of Stalin, Mao Tse-Tung, Ho Cho Minh and Che Guevara.[276] Although accepted by the majority of staff, Armstrong vetoed the motion claiming that the courses were overtly political and concerned with men of action and not of thought.[277] While the staff recognised that Armstrong held this legal power, the majority considered it an illegitimate use of academic authority constituting a breach of academic freedom.[278] A number of staff wrote to Armstrong claiming,

> By your unilateral act you have destroyed the spirit of co-operation in the department and unilaterally abrogated the custom in our department that every staff member shall have an effective voice in determining all matters of importance to the department.[279]

Although a compromise on the course was eventually reached the dispute had a significant impact on the functioning of the department and paradoxically expedited the process of democratisation. Furthermore, an important structural change occurred in the department when Professor Martin

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[276] A useful overview of the dispute is provided by Bruce Williams in the document: Not for Publication – 12 July 1971, DMA, 6, 18. See also: 'Thesis, Antithesis, ...', *University of Sydney News*, 3, no. 7, 16 June 1971; 'Thesis, Antithesis, Synthesis!', *The University of Sydney News*, 3, no. 10, 28 July 1971. It also gained coverage in the national press, see 'Philosophic Dialogues', *Nation*, 26 June 1971, p. 7, which includes various letters exchanged between Michael Devitt, Wal Suchting and David Armstrong.
[277] It was passed by both moderate and radical staff, including the soon to be head of department, Graham Nerlich. Department of Philosophy Staff meeting, 7 June 1971. DMA, 6, 18.
[278] John Burnheim and Graham Nerlich, Academic Freedom and Democracy in the University Department, Letter to Bruce Williams, July 19 1971, DMA, 6, 9. Under the by-laws, the democratic functioning of the department bore no legal significance. The Vice Chancellor, Bruce Williams clarified this by informing Professor Armstrong 'the professors of philosophy are jointly responsible for the teaching of philosophy in all its parts', including, 'the judgement of what constitutes philosophy and where to direct teaching resources.' Bruce Williams, Memorandum to Professors Armstrong and Martin, 7 June 1971, DMA, 6, 4.
[279] Letter from Seven Staff to Armstrong, 22 June, DMA 6, 5. George Molnar described the situation where 'Departmental matters came to be discussed and decided with increasing frequency at meetings of staff at which proposals were put, argued, and voted upon. The decisions reached, whatever their formal status, acquired practical finality, even when one or both professors were outvoted.' Speech given to the Aristotelian society, 7 September 1972, reported in *Honi Soit*, 14 September 1972, p. 7.

resigned at the end of 1971 and Graham Nerlich replaced him as Head of the Department in May 1972. Although not a 'radical', Nerlich was both amenable to student demands for participation in the department. Armstrong, the senior philosopher, accepted Nerlich's headship on the condition that he reserved the right 'to act independently in extreme circumstances.'[280] This 'gentleman's agreement' was a recipe for further instability.

In 1972 a dispute over the appointment of a tutor snowballed into demands for democratisation. On 10 July, the department, including part-time tutors and one undergraduate representative voted to appoint the outspoken socialist Patrick Flanagan as tutor.[281] Against Armstrong's wishes, Nerlich sent the departmental recommendation to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for approval. While Armstrong felt that the appointment was substantially wrong, his main grievance was procedural; it was academically improper for anyone other than permanent staff to vote on appointments.[282]

This dispute escalated when Armstrong was given a copy of a private note from Devitt to Nerlich. Armstrong distributed the note at an Australian Association of Philosophy conference in an act of 'self-defence.'[283] The handwritten message stated:

> The beast will not leave any of us in peace. It seems necessary therefore, that he be discredited and driven from the university. I shall henceforth support any tactic (within certain limits) that seems likely to help the achievement of this end.[284]

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[280] Graham Nerlich, Confidential Statement to the Council of the AAP, August 23 1972, DMA, 6, 9.
[281] On Flanagan's politics, see for example: Patrick Flanagan, 'The Theory and Practice of Radical Pacifism', *Honi Soit*, 22 July 1971, pp. 8-9, 15. Patrick Flanagan, 'Ideology and the Abuse of Scholarship', *Honi Soit,* 14 October 1971, pp. 8-9.
[282] David Armstrong, Letter to *Nation Review*, 'Those Quadrangle Capers', September 2 1972, DMA, 6, 9.
[283] Statement by Professor Armstrong to the AAP, 20 Augusts 1972, DMA, 6, 9.
[284]The nickname 'the beast' derives from a photograph taken of Armstrong scuffling with a student during a speech given at Sydney University by the South Vietnamese Defence Minister. Rowan Cahill, 'Philosophy Revisited', *Honi Soit*, 28 October 1971. There was much debate about the veracity of this plot. See John Burnheim, 'Is there a Plot' and other articles reprinted in 'The Quadrangle Papers', *Honi Soit,* 14 September, 1972. See also 'Leftist Plot Claim Called Historical', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 August 1972; 'Left Plot to Get Uni Man', *Melbourne Herald*, 24 August 1972; 'Thugs Oust Professor', *Daily Telegraph*, 6 September 1972.

Deemed 'The New Orr Case',[285] debate exploded in the press, with Liberal state parliamentarian Peter Coleman labelling it a 'Leftist conspiracy' and 'part of the New Left ideal of worker-control in a university department, or of democratization, as they call it.'[286] Coleman requested the amendment of the university statute so as to enable 'professional standards of conduct' to be imposed. However, Eric Willis, the Liberal Minister for Education, refused to intervene as 'it has been a long and cherished tradition that universities should not only seek to stand on their own feet but also should remain as independent as possible from outside influence.'[287]

While the university was safe from outside interference, conflict continued within its borders. Armstrong's suggestion of a new slogan 'Consultation yes, Representation no', did not prove popular with students.[288] *Honi Soit* published newspaper reports and correspondence in a special eight-page edition entitled 'The Quadrangle Papers', which whipped up student support for democratisation. After a protest by 300 philosophy students,[289] the Deputy Vice-Chancellor William O'Neil appointed Patrick Flanagan.[290] In a leaflet produced by Jean Curthoys and Richard Arthur, the authors claimed 'unconditional victory for the majority of the staff and students, i.e. those interested in the democratic running of the department.'[291] While the dispute petered out, it was the last step in the progression towards full democratisation of the department. The leaflet concluded, 'Very soon there should be the first departmental meeting where undergraduates will have voting rights. We urge students to make full use of their new powers.'[292]

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[285] H.C Eddy to Graham Nerlich, 4 September 1971, reprinted in 'The Quadrangle Papers', *Honi Soit,* 14 September, 1972.
[286] 23/8/72 New South Walers Parliamentary Debates (43 Parliament at Third Session) pp. 242-248, DMA, 6, 7. See also 'Leftist attempt to discredit Professor: Claim by Liberal MLA', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 August, 1972. See also: 'Dispute At University: Govt. Stays Out', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 September 1972; 'MP Demands An End To Campus 'Witch Hunting', *The Australian*, 24 August 1972. See also Hannah Forsyth, 'Knowledge and intelligence: Why ASIO Thought University Knowledge Would Undermine Parliamentary Democracy, 1968-1973', Draft Chapter, The ownership of knowledge in higher education in Australia, 2010.
[287] Ibid.
[288] 'Professor Armstrong Discusses Devitt and Democratisation', *Honi Soit,* 14 September 1972.
[289] '300 Want Ban on Tutor Lifted', *The Australian,* 8 September 1972; 'Vice-Chancellor Reverses Stand in Campus Row', *The Australian*, 9 September 1972. However, a handwritten note on a copy of this paper, in Armstrong's handwriting says 'Actual numbers probably 150. The Philosophy Room cannot hold 300.' DMA, 6, 13.
[290] William O'Neil to G.C. Nerlich and D.M. Armstrong, 25 August 1972, DMA, 6, 10.
[291]Student Meeting Results in Victory, DMA, 6, 9.
[292] Ibid.

The philosophy staff approved a motion for a basic democratic constitution on the 13 November 1972, which extended the franchise to all students enrolled in the Philosophy Department. The only limitation was the right to veto granted to both a majority of staff and a majority of students.[293] While granting the franchise to all students was unprecedented at any Australian university, the constitution represented only the potential for educational self-management. There were several problems in this 'paper democracy', pointed out by the group, 'Philosophy Staff and Students for Self management.'[294] First, the changes were promoted by staff, 'from above, rather than carried though as a result of student initiative.[295] Secondly, there was a mismatch between the democratised department and the 'authoritarianism of the overall university structure.' The leaflet noted that permanent staff who opposed any proposals could appeal to higher administrative bodies, such as the Faculty, the Professorial Board or the University Senate. From a staff perspective, the Acting Head, Associate Professor Keith Campbell noted, an inevitable source of tension arose because the departmental head still bore 'sole and personal responsibility for decisions, although they have no special share of power in arriving at those decisions.'[296] Irrespective of the problems involved, granting equal voting rights to all students was a radical step, opening up the possibility for a radical experiment in participatory democracy.

The four staff, Armstrong, Tom Rose, Ausma Mednis and David Stove, who voted against democratisation, were reluctant to see any decisions made by the department as legitimate.[297] Deep differences in academic and pedagogic policy, exacerbated by personal animosities meant that majority decisions made by students and staff were repugnant to this minority of senior staff. This was exacerbated by the fact that the demand for democratisation included an 'inbuilt majority for change'

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[293] Philosophy Department Staff-student Meeting, 13 November 1972, DMA, 6, 10.
[294]Philosophy Staff and Students for Self-management, DMA, 6, 9.
[295] Indeed, this contradicts a central tenet of participatory democracy that 'by definition participatory democracy cannot be opposed from above.' George Benello and Dimitrios Roussopoulos (eds.), *The Case for Participatory Democracy* (New York: Grossman, 1971), p. 9.
[296] Keith Campbell, Statement to the Senate Committee on Matters Arising Out of Philosophy Course Proposals, 7 July 1973, Burnheim Papers.
[297] David Armstrong, To All Philosophy Students at Sydney University, DMA, 6, 21.

in terms of substantive issues.[298] Hence, the situation appeared to be heading inexorably towards conflict.

The Strike

The strike, which erupted in June 1973, involved the broad mass of students to a greater extent than any past educational, campus-based issue. Although the involvement of sympathetic staff was a necessary condition for success, it was the direct action of students demanding control over the production and delivery of knowledge in the university, which established the strike as something unique in the history of Sydney University and in the development of participatory democracy. The strike was a deeply complex affair, which acquired a multitude of meanings over time. Professor Henry Mayer, of the Government Department, observed that 'everything about this event is contested and contestable. Only a major novel could do justice to the moods, illusions, hopes, fears and stratagems involved.'[299] While it is not possible to explicate all the hopes of the movement, this section will address several issues raised by the strike, particularly the goals, strategy and tactics of the movement as well as its internal dynamics. Intuitively and analytically, democracy is often conceived of as a continuum. Hence, it is important to ask: How democratic, in fact, was this break-out of participatory democracy?

A complex interplay of causes led to the strike including those affecting the university as a whole, identified in Chapter One, and those specific to the department.[300] On 26 February the department voted thirty to six in favour of the course, 'The Politics of Sexual Oppression' to be taught by Curthoys and Jacka as part-time lecturers. The voting numbers indicate that few students were regularly participating in departmental meetings at this time. Moreover, despite many junior staff participating in this vote, a majority of permanent staff were in favour, negating the need for a staff

[298] Keith Campbell, Statement to the Senate Committee, 7 July 1973, Burnheim Papers.
[299] Henry Mayer, 'Making Sense of the University Strike', *The Australian,* 11 June 1973. Indeed the strike did inspire a novel; Keith Thomas, *Idlers in the Land* (Melbourne: Hutchinson, 1978). Historical novels are able to capture the atmosphere quite accurately. Jean Curthoys for instance has recommended, Malcolm Bradbury, *The History Man: The Classic Satire of University Life* (London: Arrow, 1975).
[300] The most comprehensive overview of the strike is contained in the Senate Committee Report appointed to look into the disputes. It was reprinted in the *University of Sydney News,* 5, no. 11, 25 July 1973. See also: Westmore, 'The Strike at Sydney University', pp. 23-29.

veto under the constitution. However, the senior staff, including Professors Nerlich and Armstrong and Associate Professors Rose and Campbell were amongst the few who voted against the course.[301] Regardless, the Arts Faculty approved the renamed course 'Philosophical Aspects of Feminist Thought' thirty-five votes to thirty-four on the casting vote of the Dean.

The power to appoint staff resided with Deputy Vice-Chancellor William O'Neil who referred the matter to a Professorial Board after receiving objections from Armstrong to the effect that the course was overtly political and not philosophical in character.[302] The Board commissioned a committee to inquire, amongst other things, into the qualifications of Jacka and Curthoys, as the course proposal had become wedded with the two graduate students who proposed it. Indeed, Curthoys noted in an interview on ABC radio, a position she came to deeply regret, that a male teacher could not give the course as, 'the oppressor simply can't understand the nature of the oppressed.'[303] On 18 June, the Professorial Board overruled its committee that had recommended in favour of the course and voted against the course thirty-nine votes to seven.[304]

This decision enraged philosophy students who rejected the authoritarian power of the professorial oligarchy in striking down the democratic decision made by the department. The student body was galvanised into action and the following day 300 students and staff picketed a lecture given by

[301] It was a tactical error on those in favour of the course to allow a separate vote of permanent staff to be recorded, as their seniority could then be used to undermine the authority. Letter from various staff and students to Keith Campbell 27 Feb 1973, DMA, 6, 17. Leonie Kramer pointed this out in her criticism of the Senate report, published alongside the senate report. *University of Sydney News*, 25 July 1973.

[302] Campbell, in his capacity of acting head, applied to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, William O'Neil for the funds to pay the two post-graduate students as part-time lecturers. Although Campbell assumed he had this power, subject to the power of the Senate, this power is, by delegation from the Vice Chancellor, vested in the DVC. O'Neil noted that 'I take this responsibility seriously. As a rough guess, I query about 5% of recommendations. I never regard myself as the professor's rubber stamp.' Letter from O'Neil to Profs. Armstrong and Nerlich, 25 August 1972, DMA, 6, 10. On the objections from Armstrong see: Armstrong to O'Neil, 26 April 1972, DMA, 6, 17.

[303] Armstrong brought the transcript to the Professorial Board's attention. Statement by D.M. Armstrong to the Professorial Board, Monday June 18 1973. DMA, 6, 18. Armstrong had been viewed as the principal opponent of the course as early as March. 'Strong-arm tactics', *Honi Soit*, 28 March 1973. Curthoys has come to deeply regret this position, which she felt was a denial of fundamental liberal values and of the university as a public institution. Email correspondence with Curthoys; Jean Curthoys, 'Memoirs of a Feminist Dinosaur', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 13, no. 27 (1988), pp. 55-61.

[304] 'Feminist Course Emasculated', *Honi Soit*, 21 June 1973; 'Professors Veto Course on Women's Lib', *The Australian*, 19 June 1973.

Professor Armstrong.[305] On 20 June, a general meeting attended by some 250 philosophy students voted to strike until the two postgraduate students were appointed to teach the course.[306] The strike generally meant that students and lecturers attended prescribed classes, but would discuss issues associated with the strike instead of the prescribed curriculum. The strike spread throughout the university, capturing the imagination of the student body. However, the extent of the strike is difficult to determine.[307] Conservative estimates limit it to 6 of the 100 departments, with the total figure being most often listed as 2,000 students, almost exclusively in the Arts Faculty.[308] While The SRC voted to join the strike a week in, as one commentator noted, 'jumping on the bandwagon' in 'a laughable attempt to show students it still exists', the decision to strike was not instigated by the SRC but discussed by students in individual departments and lecture groups.[309]

As the strike gathered momentum it became chameleon-like, embracing a mixture of hopes and demands. The strike captured elements in broader society, with Jack Mundy placing a green ban on the university through the Builder's Labourer's Federation and speaking at various student meetings on 'Sexism and Self-Management.'[310] One commentator noted, 'everyone knows you can't have a real

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[305] 'Course on Women's Lib Demanded', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 June 1973; 'Philosophy Staff Strike for Womens Course', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 June 1973.
[306] The department at this time numbered some 644 members, including 429 first year students. Senate Committee Report, *University of Sydney News,* 5, no. 11, 25 July 1973; Westmore, 'The Strike at Sydney University', p. 24.
[307] It has been noted by the Sydney University archivist that a list of staff members on strike is contained within the following archive, however, due to the personal details it will not be released until 2023. G3/185 General Subject Files; Item 26/2508 Senate Committee Re. Philosophy Court Proposals, 1973.
[308] Of the departments to declare themselves on strike, Alison Bashford lists Government, Italian, Fine Arts, Education, Anthropology and History joined the strike. Bashford, 'The Return of the Repressed: Feminism in the Quad', p. 49. Westmore confirms the strike as limited to six departments Wetmore, 'The Strike at Sydney University', p. 24. However, a multitude of leaflets and strike bulletins indicate that elements of Economics, Industrial Relations Geography, Science and Latin were also on strike. See: Who decides? DMA, 6, 15; Jack Hermann, SRC Notice, DMA, 6, 24; Strike bulletin no. 5, DMA, 6, 24; Moreover, it was difficult to know which staff members were on strike, or partially on strike. 2000 is the figure most often cited with 2,600 being the highest, Graham Williams, '2,600 on Strike in Week Old Protest' *The Australian*, 4 July 1973.
[309] George Maltabarow, 'The Strike', *The Union Recorder*, 53, no. 13, 5 July 1973. For those in favour of the strike it was a tactical error, as for those students such as in engineering or medicine who could not afford to strike indefinitely, it effectively ruled them out of the strike and any other action 'Staff students unite!', *Honi Soit*, 5 July 1973. See also Strike Bulletin no. 7, Burnheim Papers.
[310] Mass Meeting on the Strike: Sexism and Self-Management, Burnheim Papers; 'Unions Back Strike', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 June 1973; 'Women's Embassy and Builders Ban at the Uni: Liberationists Battle: 2,000 Students and Staff Strike', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 June 1973, p. 16. Mundy did not downplay the sexism issue in the strike and keenly articulated that he was striking in respect to the Feminist cause in combination with self-management. Other unions also went on strike including the Clothing Trades Union and the Shop Assistants Union which had a majority of female members. 'Unions Call for Women Studies' *Daily Telegraph*, 28 June 1973.

strike unless you have a union leader involved. The ubiquitous Jack Mundy has now intervened on the side of democracy, women's rights, student-worker control and any other cause that this writer has in haste omitted.'[311] Strike bulletins took seriously the parallel between workers' control of industry and student power carrying the slogan 'Worker and Students Unite.'[312]

The strike itself was an admixture of spectacle and serious deliberation. Jacka, although not belittling the aspirations of the strikers, referred to the time as 'the madness.'[313] Unlike some industrial disputes, striking students did not passively avoid 'work'. Rather, like some workers who picketed their employers, it was an active strike. A tent embassy was set up in the Quadrangle, with a large banner declaring 'Sisterhood is Powerful'. The Philosophy staff room was 'liberated' and turned into the strike headquarters which became a frenetic hive of activity where tactics and strategy were debated and strike bulletins produced daily.[314]

The strike emphasised a sense of communal interest amongst students. Alongside participatory democracy, the theme of community characterised the New Left in both theory and practice.[315] Mayer painted a positive picture of the strike:

> The strike created a community and catered to that increasingly large group of students who demand a life-style experience from the university 'It's the first time I have ever talked to anyone here, I am learning a lot about the power structure through common action', was a typical and common remark.[316]

Forty years later, Jean Curthoys recalled the experience as darker and more doctrinaire:

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[311] George Maltabarow, 'Our Jack', *The Union Recorder*, 53, no. 13, 5 July 1973.
[312] Strike Bulletin no. 7, Burnheim Documents. There was heavy discussion about whether outside help was useful, 'Outsiders Can Aid Cause', *Daily Telegraph,* 29 June 1973.
[313] Liz Jacka, interview, 17 December 2010.
[314] Ibid.
[315] Teodori, *The New Left*, pp. 34-47.
[316] Henry Mayer, 'Making Sense of the University Strike', *The Australian,* 11 June 1973.

> As for the functioning of the strike committee, my main recollection is of the way it transformed itself, in the space of about a week, from a group of students engaged enthusiastically all over campus – well proselytizing – to one ensconced in a darkish room (the strike headquarters) for more than twelve hours a day, debating ideological clichés remote from anything much to do with university politics. It became a case of Marxists and Anarchists slugging it out with reference, ultimately, to the tactics of the Russian Revolution.[317]

The strike encouraged radical re-education with alternative lectures on topics such as 'How to Depose a Professor', 'Gay Studies' and 'Democratisation of Education' which harked back to the ideals of the Free U.[318] A 10 page booklet, entitled 'Sexism in the University' was written by Jean Curthoys and fellow post-graduate students Ann Summers and Liz Fell, which reproduced the text of lectures given when Carole Pateman incorporated discussion of Feminism and the strike as part of her classes in Government.[319] David McKnight likened the strike to the moratorium movement, 'in queues, over coffee, between lectures, students were talking about it – and talking seriously, a phenomenon I'd only seen before in "big issues" like the moratorium.'[320] The strike began at the departmental level and connected the remote decisions of the Professorial Board to their own education.

The strike gathered momentum and on 25 June a mass meeting in the quadrangle was attended by 1000 students and staff.[321] Later on that day, about 150 students invaded the Professorial Board meeting with a petition demanding the course be approved.[322] On 29 June a compromise was reached between Acting Vice-Chancellor William O'Neil, and Curthoys and Jacka, where they agreed to give the course as part-time tutors under the nominal supervision of John Burnheim. However, O'Neil

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[317] Jean Curthoys, email correspondence.

[318] Alternative Education Now, Attendance Free!, DMA, 6, 14.

[319]Jean Curthoys, Anne Summers and Liz Fell, *Sexism in the University*, 26 June 1973, Burnheim Papers. Indeed, even Henry Mayer had his 'consciousness raised', praising the intellectual nature of the lecture. Henry Mayer Submission to the Senate Committee on the Philosophy Course', G3/185 General Subject Files; Item 26/2349 Senate Committee Re. Philosophy Course Proposals 1973- 1976.

[320]David McKnight, 'Successful Uni Strike', *Tribune*, 5 August 1973.

[321] 'Students Vote Against Board', *The Australian*, 26 June 1973.

[322]'Womens [sic] Lib invades University Meeting', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 June 1973; Westmore, 'The Strike at Sydney University', p. 25; *Democrat*, 8, no. 13, 27 June 1973, DMA, 6, 14.

made this compromise conditional on Armstrong's support, which was not forthcoming.[323] Students interpreted this as a stalling tactic and the strikes continued with a renewed intensity.[324] Following an inquiry by the University Senate, which recommended the 'O'Neil formula', the Professorial Board approved the course 23 votes to 21.[325] The appointments were duly made and the movement celebrated victory.[326]

Participatory Democracy and Feminism: Contrary or Complimentary?

There is an inherent danger in exploring this history through the lens of participatory democracy, namely, that it will distort the meaning and significance of the events in question.[327] The strike involved a kaleidoscope of partly co-operative and partly conflicting issues predicated on competing ideologies, pedagogies and political views.[328] Tension arose between the two most prominent aspects of the strike: the struggle for democracy and the fight against sexism. Australian historian Alison Bashford reflected that, 'One of the dominant ways of talking about the strike was – and still is – framed around the question "what was the *real* issue?"'[329] David McKnight, writing just after the strike, commented:

[323] In Armstrong's opinion this painted him as an enemy of 'the decent British compromise' and his position quickly deteriorated. David Armstrong, 'Self Profile' in Brogden, *D.M. Armstrong*, p. 39. See also *Democrat*, 8, no. 14, 19 July 1973, DMA, 6, 20, for a similar view expressed at the time.
[324] 'O'Neil Recants and Staff Retaliate', *Honi Soit* 12 July 1973, p. 1.
[325] 'Feminist Course to be Guided by Male', *The Australian*, 17 July 1973.
[326] Good News Bulletin 3, DMA 6, 20; 'Strike Over', *Honi* Soit, 19 July, 1973. 'University Feminists look like winners', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 July 1973; 'First Blood to the Girls: Crisis at the University', *Women's Day*, 6 August 1973.
[327] It would not be fantastical to suggest that this thesis itself may be construed as a historiographical attempt to claim ownership of these events as part of the history of participatory democraticy in the New Left, rather than the history of feminism and women's liberation. However, it is not the aim of this thesis to privilege this interpretation, but rather to accept the multiplicity of historical meanings that may be derived from the events.
[328] Henry Mayer, despite his opposition, was perceptive in recognising that multiplicity of aims in the strike, contending that 'sociologically speaking' there were eight strikes occurring, ranging from the wickedness, authoritarianism and sexism of God-professors, the remoteness of the professorial board, elements of the counter-culture , de-schooling and finally those who believed it was Paris, May 1968. Henry Mayer Submission to the Senate Committee on the Philosophy Course', G3/185 General Subject Files; Item 26/2349 Senate Committee Re. Philosophy Course Proposals 1973- 1976.
[329] Alison Bashford, 'The Return of the Repressed: Feminism in the Quad', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 13, no. 27, 1988, p. 47. Megan Jones has also considered this issue in relationship to the Free U and the development of feminist knowledge in universities. Megan Jones, Remembering Academic Feminism, p. 74. Barbara Caine, although noting the sexism displayed during the strike, believes that this demonstrates that the strike was more about democracy, 'In my view the discontinuity between the philosophy strike and the establishment of women's studies points to the ways in which the philosophy strike was connected to institutional questions and to demands for institutional change in which feminism was merely incidental.' Barbara Caine, 'Women's Studies at the University of Sydney', A*ustralian Feminist Studies*, 13, no. 27 (1988), pp. 99-106.

> The strike itself was funny and paradoxical, for there were two issues: that of the male-dominated theory and activity of the university and that of the autocratic power of the university authorities. Just who should be fighting for what and which was the "real issue": sexism or self-management, become knotty problems in the course of the strike.[330]

Attempts were made by various factions to control the meaning of the strike and capitalise on the momentum and fervour created by the strike to push different agendas. A hostile editorial in *Honi Soit* politely typified this tendency, claiming, 'all the deadshits jumped on the strike and used it to flog their own piddling shit little causes.'[331] Indeed, the banners outside the women's tent embassy proclaiming 'Sisterhood is Powerful' and 'Staff-Student Control', which fluttered peacefully adjacent to one another, belie the antagonism that existed between the strikers who pushed democratisation over the sexism displayed by the Professorial Board.[332] While those who supported the feminist aims were equally supportive of participatory democracy, which would only further their cause, the reverse was not always true. Support for the strike did not preclude overt anti-feminism. As the editorial continued,

> The general idea of the whole thing was to keep the Philosophy Department's democratic ideas working, and show that the board couldn't just veto it without a fight at least, the specific issue being dealt with (and therefore the less important concern) was the appointment

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[330] David McKnight, 'Successful Uni Strike', *Tribune*, 5 August 1973.

[331] Glorfindal Eunuchwarbler, 'Shit Pouring Time', *Honi Soit, 19 July 1973*, p. 6; 'Is There a Professor in the Kitchen?', (editorial) *The Sun*, 26 June 1973.

[332] Anne Neale and Pamela Hansford, Sexist Aspects of Professorial Decision Making, DMA, 6, 16. See also Anne Neale, 'The Philosophy Strike: Feminism by-passed at Sydney', *Refractory Girl* (Winter 1973), pp. 28-29; 'First Blood to the Girls: Crisis at the University', *Women's Day*, 6 August, where Curthoys and Jacka discuss the University as the 'citadel of male privilege.' The Strike bulletins released by the Strike committee also displayed ambivalence as to what constituted the real issue. See especially, Strike Bulletin no. 5, DMA, 6, 15. Jean Curthoys drew an interesting link back to the Marxism dispute in 1971, arguing that the response to that, although antagonistic was different. While the Marxism cause was seen as dangerous in propagating Marxist ideas, the Feminist course was seen as an invasion of 'subject matter which is essentially trivial and feminine' a lowering of academic standards, rather than a threat. Jean Curthoys 'Sexism and the University' in *Sexism in the University*, p. 7-8. For a forthright opposing view see 'David Stove, 'The Feminists and the Universities', *Quadrant*, 28, no. 9 (1984), p. 8; David Stove, 'Jobs for the Girls: Feminist Vapours', *Quadrant*, 29, no. 5 (1985), pp. 34-35 and more recently, David Stove, 'A Farewell to Arts: Marxism, Semiotics and Feminism' in *Cricket versus Republicanism*, (Sydney: Quakers Hill Press, 1995).

> of Curthoys and Jacka. But oh no, the heavy handed women's lib fuckwits jumped on the band wagon and "Sexism" was splattered round the campus until it ran diarrhoea like.[333]

Even the men, who agreed with the feminist aims of the strike, often downplayed the sexist nature of the Professorial Board's decision for 'tactical reasons' as it might alienate male supporters.[334] Women found themselves in the unfortunate position of needing male support in order to succeed in the strike. Anne Neale, a graduate student wrote, 'Our greatest disappointment was that the women students did not present a united front.'[335]

The inner core of activists on strike was not immune from displays of sexist and authoritarian behaviours and attitudes, often displayed by 'Left heavies with "political expertise."'[336] Feminist strikers recognised that sexism and male chauvinism were not only embedded in overtly authoritarian structures but also deeply rooted in the interpersonal relationships of the radicals themselves.[337] Curthoys even noted that, 'This strike has helped advance our thinking about sexual oppression.'[338] Jacka similarly stated that 'The whole situation mirrors perfectly the way that men unconsciously manipulate women in society and the way women accept this subordination.'[339] More recently, Jacka reflected on the centrality and dominance of the 'intellectually fierce' radical philosophy lecturers George Molnar and Wal Suchting in the strike movement. Jacka noted that the strikers failed to fully apply the most critical aspects of feminism to their immediate situation.[340]

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[333] Glorfindal Eunuchwarbler, 'Shit Pouring Time', *Honi Soit*, 19 July 1973, p. 6. 'Is There a Professor in the Kitchen?', (editorial) *The Sun,* 26 June 1973.

[334] David McKnight, 'Successful Uni Strike', *Tribune*, 5 August 1973.

[335] 'Women Scab in this Lib Struggle', *The Australian*, 21 July 1973.

[336] David McKnight, 'Successful Uni Strike', *Tribune*, 5 August 1973. Barbara Caine recalls a similar sexism being displayed by the 'Young Turks' in the Department of History, compared to the Professors they sought to displace. Caine, 'Women's Studies at the University of Sydney', p. 99.

[337] These problems continued when the course was running, with the women students resenting the dominance of men in discussions. 'Men to the Fore in Women's Lib Course', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 July 1973; 'Masculine Drop Out', *The Australian*, 12 December 1971.

[338] 'Women Scab in this Lib Struggle', *The Australian*, 21 July 1973.

[339] Ibid.

[340] While this thesis has generally emphasised the role of structure in social movements over individual agency and charismatic leadership, reflecting the New Social Movement school of thought, it is worth noting the importance of Suchting in this dispute, as the feminist course and the strike were both Suchting's conception. Jean Curthoys, email correspondence.

While the strike saw women addressing crowds more than any other previous on-campus political struggle, Jean Curthoys has said that ‘meetings were dominated completely by men who had not yet learned about the need to listen to women – or anyone – during meetings. It was sexism insofar as the deep, unrecognised assumption was that women wouldn't have anything valuable to say.’[341] Liz Jacka was more circumspect, noting that while meetings were chaotic, people yelled and screamed and decisions were made and overturned in endless meetings, everyone did get a say.[342] A women's caucus was set up to oppose the male dominated strike committee, but it could not match the ‘dominant macho political “style”’ and ultimately failed.[343]

At one level, as David McKnight concluded, ‘it's a cliché – they are interrelated.’ To have the feminist course under the direction of Jacka and Curthoys required students take control of their education in the face of the Professorial Board's rejection. Furthermore, to have the course recognised as intellectually valid would require that the authoritarian education relations be challenged.[344] While this is undoubtedly true, the push for democratisation did not require feminism in a similarly reciprocal manner. This unfortunate logic enabled elements of the strike movement who purveyed sexist attitudes and behaviours to justify them as tactically instrumental in order to gain mass support. Moreover, for other elements of the strike, democratisation was simply the only goal. The intersection between these two New Left movements with the student movement was incredibly problematic, especially at the level of direct subjective experience.[345]

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[341] Jean Curthoys, email correspondence.
[342] Liz Jacka, interview, 17 December 2010.
[343] Curthoys, ‘Memoirs of a Feminist Dinosaur’, p. 57.
[344] David McKnight, ‘Successful Uni Strike’, *Tribune*, 5 August 1973. Alison Bashford came to a similar, albeit more nuanced conclusion in ‘The Return of the Repressed’, p. 50.
[345] See Kary Read, ‘“Struggling to be Heard”: Tensions Between Different Voices in the Australian Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s and 1980s’ in Kate Pritchard Hughes (ed.), *Contemporary Australian Feminism* (Melbourne: Longman, 1994); Ann Curthoys, ‘“Shut up you Bourgeois Bitch”: Sexual Identity and Political Action in the anti-Vietnam War Movement’ in Marilyn Lake and Joy Damousi (eds.), G*ender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press Syndicate, 1995), p. 328 where Curthoys notes that ‘young women were a small voice in increasingly confrontational student politics.’

The Democratic Legitimacy of the Strike

The strike progressed for nearly four weeks and participants were confronted with the challenge of realising the ideal of participatory democracy in decision making within the movement itself. Student and staff showed a great deal of awareness and self-reflection when debating the internal dynamics of the strike movement.[346] Indeed, those who had become disillusioned by the strike became its strongest critics. John Mills, a lecturer in philosophy exemplified this position, returning to work just two days after going on strike. Despite criticising the Professorial Board's 'Unprecedented, arbitrary, ill-informed and unjust determination of the competence of Ms Curthoys and Jacka', Mills nevertheless denounced the 'debasement' of participatory democracy in the department:

> What happens now is simply that before such meetings a small clique decides on a course of action consistent with their political aims for the department. The agreement on aims has been used more and more by the clique to induce students into agreement on methods. In place of dictates by a shamelessly elitist professor we have manipulation (admittedly more subtle) by an elitist clique of the opposite political colour.[347]

Perhaps realising that he had done more damage to the strike than could be achieved by any of its 'real' opponents,[348] Mills issued a statement qualifying the former one:

> In speaking of the actions of cliques... I do not mean that there has been a group meeting prior to department meetings and making politically dictated decisions. There is no such group.[349]

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[346]This aspect of the student movement reflects Ricardo Blaug's notion of instituting democracy at all levels of society, including the macro, meso and micro level. Ricardo Blaug, 'New Theories of Discursive Democracy: A User's Guide' *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 22, no. 1 (1996), p. 56.

[347] John Mills, Statement, 21 June 1973, Burnheim Papers.

[348] See for instance Stop the Strike!: Alternative Strike Bulletin no 1, which used the statement as evidence against the strike, DMA, 6, 14. See also George Maltabarow, 'Arrogant Staff' and 'The Mills Bomb: An Alternative view of the Philosophy Strike', *The Union Recorder*, 53, no. 13, 5 July 1973, p. 188. Moreover, Professor Armstrong made much of Mills statements, both in his submissions to the Senate and in his last speech to the Professorial Board on the 16 July before they voted finally to approve the course. Submission by D.M. Armstrong, Monday 19 July 1973 to the Senate committee on matter arising out of the Philosophy Course proposals. G3/185 General Subject Files; Item 26/2349 Senate Committee Re. Philosophy Course Proposals 1973- 1976.

[349] John Mills, Further Statement, 25 June 1973, DMA, 6, 15.

Mills reflected a growing disaffection within the strike movement, of both staff and students, who were alienated from the more revolutionary types such as Molnar and Suchting and the tactics they used. As the strike progressed questions of the legitimacy of strikes as a tactic came under heated discussion. The Sydney University Democratic Club argued that:

> Students have a perfect right to go on strike – but equally, they have the right to attend lectures and to expect that lectures will be given. Any attempt to prevent students from attending lectures, whether by pickets, administrative fiat or otherwise is a breach of academic freedom.[350]

A group, 'Students Against the Strike', was established, which produced 'Alternative Strike Bulletins' in support of the strike's aims, but believed the strike itself was strategically wrong.[351] A student Martin Ellis wrote, 'The issue is how to effectively strip the professorial board of its present God-given powers. There is no logical step from this position to a general strike in its present forms.'[352] Ellis argued that believing that 'the threat of having no B.A. or economics graduates for a year is a powerful student weapon against the administration is absurd.' For Ellis, to cut off the supplies of scientists or mathematicians essential to the functioning of industry and commerce was a weapon. However, those faculties could least afford to and refused to strike. Ellis' views reflect the central problem with the post-industrial thesis explored in Chapter One, as it was not technical or vocational students such as science or economics who were rebelling, but rather the humanities students.[353] While the effectiveness of striking by both students and staff may have been limited in both theory and

[350] *Democrat,* 8, no. 13, 27 June 1973, DMA, 6, 14.
[351] Frank Lane-Mullins and Pat Griffin, Students against the Strike: Stop the Strike!, DMA, 6, 14. It is interesting to note that Frank Lane-Mullins was the central organising student who opposed the Political Economy movement, publishing 'Independent Economic News Bulletins. Many of these can be found in the S.791, folder 7. This demonstrates a crossover of individuals in student movement who were not only *supporting* radical movement, but *opposing* them.
[352] Martin Ellis, 'The Strike', *Honi Soit*, 19 July 1973, p. 5.
[353] Vivien Johnson, a tutor in Philosophy, urged engineering students to take seriously the characterisation of the University as a 'degree factory' and view themselves as an extension of the proletariat, being treated as human commodities. However, few students seemed to accept this perspective. Vivien Johnson, Brian Dale and Paul Hick, 'Engineering and the Strike', *The Union Recorder*, 19 July 1973. Liz Jacka noted that when she addressed engineering she was told to 'piss off' and hit with a barrage of paper planes. Liz Jacka, interview, 17 December 2010.

practice, it was the only recourse students had. It was a sign of their desperation. John Burnheim noted that striking was largely a symbolic act analogous to a hunger strike which 'hurts nobody but themselves.'[354] Yet the strike was a significant challenge to the university as it rendered the hierarchical power of the university visible.[355]

Students also debated the democratic basis of their meetings. Discussion of the size of the strike dovetailed into questions of the representativeness of open meetings. In a series of heated exchanges, the editor of *The Union Recorder*, George Maltabarow, argued with Dr Carole Pateman and Dr Peter King claiming that both lecturers turned their classes over to Jacka and Curthoys to discuss the strike despite the classes wanting to study the prescribed lecture.[356] This issue was given close examination in an article by student Norm Neill, entitled, 'Academic Apathy... Or, Don't Count On Me Mate, I'm Not Here.'[357] Neill was analysing the authoritative nature of an open meeting held in the History Department. 400 students and staff turned up, which constituted about one-third of the department's members, including all students and staff. 185 voted in favour of striking and 163 voted against, with a large number abstaining. While some students felt bound by this decision and stopped attending lecturers, others went to their next class in order to put the matter to vote in each individual lecture group. No lecture group found a majority in favour of striking. Confusion as to which decision was binding stemmed from the fact that two-thirds of the department did not attend the first meeting, and moreover, those who did not attend lectures as they felt bound by the initial vote, would have voted in favour of striking.[358] There were no simple answers to these questions and democratic legitimacy was constantly contested and worked out in practice.

[354] Burnheim, Submission to Senate. Burnheim's comments reflect Christopher's Rootes description of student inhabiting a symbolic universe, concerned with the reproduction of symbolic goods. Rootes, Christopher, 'Student Radicalism: Politics of Moral Protest', p. 476.
[355] This symbolic challenge of collective action is discussed by Melucci in 'Social Movements and the Democratization of Everyday Life' in John Keane (ed.), *Civil Society and the State* (London: Verso, 1988), p. 250.
[356] George Maltabarow, 'Arrogant Staff' in *The Union Recorder*, 53, no. 13. p. 186. See also the replies from Carol Pateman and Peter King in *The Union Recorder*, 53, no. 15, 19 July 1973, p. 220.
[357] Norm Neill, 'Academic Apathy... Or, Don't Count On Me Mate, I'm Not Here', *The Union Recorder*, 53, no. 15, 25 July 1973, p. 220.
[358] Norm Neill, 'Academic Apathy', p. 220.

Ultimately, participatory democracy emphasises the importance of deliberation and consensus, in which aggregative voting was not conducive to authoritative and sustained decision making. However, Neill was more equivocal when he compared the History Department vote to the vote of the Professorial Board that finally approved the Feminist Course. Considering only 44 Professors, out of the Board's total of 120 voted, 23-21 in favour of the course, Neill asks rhetorically,

> Which then gives a more representative decision – a meeting of one-third of the Professorial Board to decide whether or not to approve an academic appointment, or a meeting of one-third of the staff and students of a department to decide whether or not to strike? [359]

The philosophy strike was one of the most significant examples of participatory democracy that has occurred within the student movement at Sydney University, or across Australia more generally. Taking root in a divided and politicised Philosophy Department the successful staff-student alliance captured an already politicised student imagination, leading to one of the most sustained and successful student protests against the university administration.

The immediate legacy of the protest was a divided department. While the compromise formula on the feminist course may have served as a face saving formula for the administration, it was nonetheless a substantial defeat for five of the senior staff, namely, Campbell, Armstrong, Mednis, Rose and Stove. Campbell felt that the delivery of a 'mainstream philosophy program in a mainstream manner' was jeopardised.[360] Bruce Williams, who had just returned from leave, was unhappy with how the administration handled the matter and feared losing 'all the philosophers of repute.'[361] Faced with a situation that the Senate deemed 'an impossible atmosphere in which to carry on the affairs of any department,' Keith Campbell petitioned the Vice-Chancellor to divide the Department. [362] Williams

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[359] Norm Neill, 'Academic Apathy', p. 220.
[360] Keith Campbell Sydney University; Department of Traditional and Modern in Graham Oppy and N. N. Trakakis, *A Companion to Philosophy in Australia and New Zealand*.
[361] David Armstrong, 'Self Profile', p. 40.
[362] Senate Report, *University of Sydney News,* 25 July 1973.

formally announced the split on 2 October 1973. The School of Philosophy would be composed of the Department of Traditional and Modern and the Department of General Philosophy.[363]

[363] 'Philosophy department to become a school', *University of Sydney News*, 5, no. 15, 13 October 1973; Jean Curthoys, 'Bruce Splits the Philosophy Department', *Honi Soit,* 18 October 1973.

Chapter Four

An Island of Democracy in a Sea of Hierarchy

'There is a very unpleasant fate which is reserved for those in the university who spend most of their time engaging in radical politics. The very simple punishment, that fits this crime, is they have to go on engaging in radical politics.'[364] – David Armstrong.

As the dust of the strike settled, the newly formed Department of General Philosophy was left to realise its demands for participatory democracy within the confines of a hostile and hierarchical university. While General Philosophy inherited a democratic constitution from its predecessor, participatory democracy is by definition never a question of constitutional rights, but instead depends on the continuing discursive and deliberative potential of a group to effectively make and implement decisions. As both staff and students recognised, the department was a major test case for the possibility of participatory democracy working on a continuous day to day basis, rather than in a period of great excitement and rupture which characterised the strike. However, by all empirical and historical accounts, participatory democracy is an inherently fragile mode of organisation.[365] Democratic theorist Ricardo Blaug, observed that:

> Whatever the combination of causes, democratic outbreaks seem to have a discernible life cycle: they burn brightly, then either fizzle, are repressed, become profoundly unfair, or are co-opted and institutionalised. They can last for moments, or for months but eventually they come to an end.[366]

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[364] David Armstrong and Edgar Waters, interview with David Armstrong (1986), National Library of Australia, no. 2462864.

[365] This includes scholars of both the historical, sociological and philosophical persuasion. Francesca Polletta, 'Participatory Democracy in Social Movements' in David Snow et al (ed.), *Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 175.

[366] Ricardo Blaug, 'Outbreaks of Democracy', p. 153.

Rather than relying on generalised sociological criteria, I will explore the internal and external challenges faced by the new department in implementing participatory democracy as its mode of governance. I aim to provide an understanding not just of the rise, but also the fall of this radical experiment. The roots of this denouement are complex, yet at the same time overly simple, resting on the dialectical interplay between external and internal causes.

Despite some reforms, including the replacement of the Professorial Board with the Academic Board in 1975 and the tokenistic inclusion of student representatives on various boards and committees, including departments and faculties, the hierarchical and centralised decision making structures of the university remained deeply entrenched.[367] The university administration was inherently averse to the democratic challenge posed by General Philosophy to this established order.

The Department of General Philosophy was viewed as an embarrassment and threat to the administration both because of its democratic governance and the perceived absurdity of a university containing two philosophy departments. However, a further more significant reason lay in the department's radical intellectual programme. While it would be inappropriate to ascribe theoretical unity to General Philosophy, it viewed philosophy as a deeply political activity and although rejecting the label 'Critical and Contemporary Philosophy', this was an apt description, being influenced by trends in the continental tradition. Louis Althusser, a Marxist philosopher, became the dominant influence in the department. The importance of his thought lay in the implication that students and staff were playing a revolutionary role just by engaging in theoretical work. The struggle against bourgeois ideology purveyed by Anglo-American analytic philosophy was part of the fight against

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[367] 'Proposals for Reorganisation in University Government', *University of Sydney News*, 5, no. 7, 9 May 1973; Reorganisation of University Government', *University of Sydney News*, 16 April 1975, pp. 66-67; 'Exit Professorial Board After 89 Years', *University of Sydney News*, 25 June 1975. For many students this was perceived as an exercise in consolidation and centralisation of power that was anathema to the demands for more participation. See Paul Roberts and Jean Curthoys 'Staff-Student Control as a Viable Alternative', *Honi Soit*, 6 September 1973, p. 8 and 'An Inventory of Power - Counter Course Handbook, 1977' DMA, 6, 23. Another important change was formal recognition of departments within the academic by-laws which by definition excluded staff. Moreover, as Neville Meaney argued, while the new by-laws may have extended the role of sub-professorial staff in academic government, they also consolidated the predominant position of hierarchy by turning what had been practice and precedent into a statutory system, thus placing legal impediments in the way of informal change. See S. 791, Folder 14, Neville Meaney, Statement in support of the motion on Academic Self-Government to be discussed at a special meeting of the S.A.U.T. on June 12, 1975.

United States imperialism and the elaboration of a correct theory of abstraction was their peculiar contribution in this fight.[368] John Burnheim, the Head of General Philosophy, saw the department's role, 'primarily as a theoretical one... carrying on a struggle in the domain of theory for a genuinely scientific analysis of our predicament. In philosophy this involves especially a critique of the ideological aspects of both traditional and contemporary philosophies.'[369] General Philosophy epitomised the reflexive intellectualism of the New Left of which participatory democracy was central, namely, the desire to live out their morally and intellectually justified ideas.

The Department of General Philosophy turned its critical gaze outwards to how knowledge was produced by other disciplines. This position was captured by the publication of *Paper Tigers*, a 300 page foolscap collection of staff and student contributions which arose out of theoretical work done by staff and students in the General Philosophy course entitled, 'The Critique of Social Theory', but more popularly known as the 'Counter-Ideology Course'.[370] A great deal of resentment was felt by departments which had the contents of their lectures subjected to critical scrutiny.[371] It was rumoured that the Science Department forbade their students from enrolling in the subject.[372] The course blurred the lines between student political organisation and institutional academia, evidenced by the fact that

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[368] Jean Curthoys, email Correspondence. See also: Andrew Giles-Peters, 'The Marxist Tradition' in Jan Srzednicki and David Wood, *Essays on Philosophy in Australia* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), p. 158.

[369] 'Is the General Philosophy Department Crazy?: Interview with Dr Burnheim', *Honi Soit,* 20 June 1976. This perspective almost exactly mirrored Althusser's dictum that 'Philosophy is in the last instance, class struggle in the field of theory.' Louis Althusser, *Essays in Self-Criticism* (London: New Left Books, 1975), p. 37. John Burnheim, although sympathetic to the Althusserian project was increasingly critical of its scientific pretensions. See for instance John Burnheim, The Future of the Department of General Philosophy: some Critiques and Proposals, DMA, 6, 26. Other staff, including Devitt, Mills and Stocker resented the ascendency of Althusser's thought in the department, arguing that the department was being turned into a centre for Althusserian studies, noting, 'So be it. Time will tell whether they were following a fruitful line or a false prophet.' Devitt, Mills and Stocker, 'Ruling and Ruining General Philosophy', *Honi Soit,* 23 September 1973.

[370] The official name of the course was 'Critique of Social Theory'. When General Philosophy submitted to a combined first year course with Traditional and Modern in 1977, much to the chagrin of the administration they offered this 'counter-ideology as the compulsory segment, thus exposing all first year philosophy students to its critical theory. The combined course was abandoned the following year. Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Faculty of Arts, 28 June 1976, DMA, 6, 25.

[371] Grave, *A History of Philosophy in Australia,* pp. 165-169.

[372] '... Meanwhile Back In General Philosophy', *Honi Soit*, 8 March 1977, p. 5.

students often confused the course with the activities of the similarly named Counter-Ideology Collective, run by General Philosophy staff Jean Curthoys, Wal Suchting and Ted Sadler. [373]

Developments such as this further antagonised the administration.[374] The Vice-Chancellor, who viewed the split as a temporary necessity, sought the immediate reunification of the School of Philosophy into a single department. Staff and students in the General Philosophy, although originally opposing the split, resisted attempts at reunification which would inevitably result in a curtailment of their democratic procedures and radical curriculum. As a departmental handbook noted in 1978, 'the history of the department is the history of struggle with the administration against the spectre of reamalgamation.'[375] Although, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the administration actively sought to undermine General Philosophy,[376] the department was significantly underfunded, with less than half the staff of a comparable department.[377] While all democracies face challenges from the environment in which they are embedded, the Department of General Philosophy was especially embattled, faced with both perceived and real threats from the university administration.

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[373] Letter from Mills to Professor Ward, Chairman of the Academic Board 7 July 1976, DMA, 6, 25; Ted Sadler, Discussion Document: The role of Counter-Ideology in General Philosophy, DMA, 6, 22; 'University Courses: Counter Ideology', *Honi Soit,* 23 February 1976, p. 8.

[374] Moreover, General Philosophy was the first department to declare itself on strike in July 1976 after a meeting of 200 staff and students in support with the Political Economy Movement. S.791, Folder 25, General Philosophy and the strike, 19 July 1976.

[375] Departmental Handbook, p. 8. DMA, 6, 31. Examples of this amalgamation include the appointment of a Head of the School which was perceived as a threat to General Philosophy, but not Traditional and Modern. 'Problems in the School of Philosophy', *University of Sydney News*, 9, no. 7, 18 April 1977; 'Academic Board Minutes: 21 February 1977', DMA, 6, 27.

[376]Students certainly perceived that their department was under threat. The article 'Killing Off General Philosophy' in *Honi Soit* discussed three strategies that the administration was purportedly using to strangle General Philosophy, the first, 'Death from Birth Trauma', the second, 'Death by Starvation' and the third, 'Dismemberment and Assimilation', referring to incremental and total amalgamation. *Honi Soit*, 16 September 1976.

[377] The Department of General Philosophy had approximately 700 students in 1977 compared to The Department of Traditional and Modern philosophy's more modest 200. The staff student ratio was 1:25.2 in General Philosophy compared to 1:10.7 in Traditional and Modern. Even when the economic downturn and decline in university funding during this period is considered, General Philosophy was still drastically understaffed when compared to other departments, which averaged 1:16.8. John Burnheim, An Open Letter to the Vice-Chancellor, DMA, 6, 24. In a note from Bruce Williams to the School of Philosophy gives a slightly lower figure, but still demonstrates a similar disparity, Bruce Williams, Note to staff in the School of Philosophy, 28 September 1976, DMA, 6, 23.

Conditions of Material Scarcity: Socialism in One Department

These external challenges had an adverse effect on the internal functioning of the department. The severe understaffing was the root cause of conflict as the few appointments that were made were of great consequence and were heavily contested.[378] This tension surfaced at most departmental meetings, resulting in decisions being made that did not reflect the general will of the polity.[379] It was not simply that it created bitter conflict, but also that the department was constantly forced to revise decisions in line with the hierarchical nature of the rest of the university.[380] The departmental meeting of the 8 May 1975 typifies these problems. At the meeting, Burnheim was seeking a mandate to negotiate with the administration for a tutorship in logic in order to placate Michael Devitt, who had become frustrated with the manner in which participatory democracy was being realised in practice.[381] While most of the department favoured an appointment in feminism, discussion centred on the practical effect of voting against the motion which could result in a possible staff-veto. John Burnheim, who chaired the meeting, insisted that:

> We have to make decisions about what we can really do – democracy consists in that sort of control over our actions, not in some "ideal" situation where we can get anything we want. We can have democratic decision making which recognises situations we cannot alter.[382]

Nonetheless, Peter King, the same student involved in the Government Department disputes, viewed acceptance of the motion as a 'capitulation to the bureaucracy,' while another student noted that it was wrong to hide conflict in democracies. However, the motion was eventually carried, with a radical tutor, Ted Sadler noting that while it was a concession, 'the alternative is self-destruction, which will

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[378] Alan Chalmers noted 'It is ludicrous that a department that requires nine new positions to bring the staff-student ratio up to faculty average should have to argue about whether to fill the vacancy with a logician or a Feminist.' Alan Chalmers, 'Why I Chose To Remain in General Philosophy', *Honi Soit*, 5 October 1976.

[379]Department of General Philosophy: Minutes of Adjourned Meeting, 8 May 1975. DMA, 6, 22.

[380]'... Meanwhile Back In General Philosophy', *Honi Soit*, 8 March 1977, p. 5.

[381] Michael Devitt, The Filling of Vacant Permanent Positions, 20 April 1975, DMA, 6, 22; John Burnheim, An analysis of the Needs of the Department, DMA, 6, 22.

[382] Department of General Philosophy: Minutes of Adjourned Meet 8 May 1975, DMA, 6. 22. Furthermore Burnheim argued in the GP Departmental Booklet that, 'The department, while challenging many ruling assumptions in the university must, if it is to survive as a university department continue to work largely within the framework of the university's procedure – it seems that many of the changes that could be made on a realistic appraisal of the situation, have been made.' Departmental Handbook, p. 8, DMA, 6, 31.

hurt the left more than the right.' This debate reflects the basic tension between purists who rejected any instrumental forms of decision making and pragmatists who were willing to compromise in order to avert crisis.

However, the persistent fear of antagonising the administration caused frustration amongst some of the radicals. Ted Sadler, despite earlier urging compromise, later noted that 'certainly the department may be destroyed, but better it be destroyed than it evolve into a traditionalist department. If we are destroyed, that is not the end of the political struggle, it is only the beginning.'[383] The institutionalisation and increasing pressure on this nascent democracy led to discussion, previously deliberative and consensus-orientated, being colonised by instrumental forms. The following section will attempt to tease out this interplay between internal dysfunction and external pressure.

The Boat People and the Marxist Caucus

One of the main critiques of participatory democracy explored in this thesis concerns the issue of 'cliques' dominating the informal decision making structures. This was the central claim made by three staff members, John Mills, Michael Devitt and Michael Stocker, over the substantive issue of staff appointments.[384] They claimed that a Marxist caucus, led by 'political heavies' John Burnheim, George Molnar and Wal Suchting[385] controlled the ideology and ideological apparatuses of the

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[383] 'Two steps forward, one step back' *Honi* Soit, 5 April, 1977. Suchting responded both to Ted Sadler's frustration and the *Honi Soit* article. In a rare display of moderation, Suchting reminded Sadler of the humiliating terms that Lenin had to accept from Germany to save the infant Soviet republic. Wal Suchting, Letter from Afar (Paris) 16 March 1977, DMA, 6, 26.

[384] The student press contributed to this ongoing dispute, with the article 'Killing Off General Philosophy', *Honi Soit*, 16 September 1976 which penned negative character portraits of the three 'defectors'. The following edition of *Honi Soit* published an open letter by Devitt, Mills and Stocker entitled 'Ruling and Ruining General Philosophy', *Honi Soit*, 23 September 1973. See also other private letters including 'Burnheim to Devitt, Stocker and Mills', 16 August 1976 and Devitt, Mills and Stocker to Burnheim, 30 August, 1976. DMA, 6, 24. See also various broadsheets including, 'General Philosophy News – no. 3, 1 October 1976'; 'GP News no 4, 29 October 1976', and GP News no. 5, 25 October, 1976', DMA, 6, 23. Tony Abbott of the Sydney University Democratic Club argued that the Philosophy department was manipulating students for undemocratic ends. *Democrat*, 11, no. 18, 16 September 1976, DMA, 6, 23.

[385] The make up of the caucus is difficult to identify. Burnheim denied having ever formally or informally joined the caucus. See John Burnheim, An open letter in reply to 'Ruling and Ruining General Philosophy, 23 September 1976, DMA, 6, 23. Moreover, George Molnar alleges that the Marxist caucus consisted of Wal Suchting, John Burnheim and Ted Sadler.' Libertarian Broadsheet, September 1977, DMA, 6, 26. Indeed, by this stage, Crittenden and Burnheim note that George Molnar had left the department to travel to England to make out a precarious living building wooden toys. Burnheim and Crittenden, 'Political Polarisation in Australasian Philosophy in the 1960s and their aftermath', p. 13.

department by virtue of the fact that they were the only 'active, informed, committed, organized and unified' group in the department.[386] The 'gang of three' or 'boat people' as they were known in the student press, referred to campaigns of vilification, harassment, and intimidation of individuals who opposed the caucus and likened the situation to the feminist strike where a similarly structured strike committee harassed those outside the strike and within it.[387] They concluded that the department's participatory democracy was a sham and those who supported it argued more against democracy than for the department.[388] In arguments that closely mirrored Armstrong's earlier complaints, they found it 'educationally undesirable that decisions affecting programmes in the various areas of philosophy in which we are interested should be made by that group' as they would not lead to 'proper or wise academic decisions.'[389]

It is difficult to assess these claims which were systematically denied by the Marxist caucus and other unaffiliated members of staff in a series of articles in *Honi Soit*.[390] Moreover, many of the senior staff, such as Alan Chalmers, although critical of the caucus, also strove to disassociate themselves from any 'McCarthyist hysteria.'[391] Burnheim, who denied being a member of the caucus, wrote an open letter to the dissident staff, recognising that there was a grain of truth in the claim that ends were mostly achieved only by time-consuming politicking. However, he concluded that what most members of the department resented was the 'attitude of those who simply reject the whole democratic procedure when they see it going against them.'[392]

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[386] Philosophy students, realising that the title of their own association, 'The Information and Activities Committee' was echoed in this phrase promptly made it their own motto, printing t-shirts with this newfound slogan. GP News, no. 4, 29 October 1976, DMA, 6, 23.
[387] However, the charge against the caucus was against its functioning as a group rather than as individuals. Devitt noted that 'there is something about the situation of small Marxist groups within capitalist society which means that the bourgeois labels of dogmatic, ruthless and fanatical are uncomfortably close to the truth.' Michael Devitt, Some Thoughts on Being Asked to Join the Marxist Caucus', 24 June 1973, in DMA, 6, 25. Indeed, George Molnar who was allegedly part of the caucus confirmed 'the subtle and sometimes not so subtle use of the psychology of group pressure by Marxists in the Department with a view to perpetuating their own philosophical orthodoxy.' George Molnar, Libertarian Broadsheet, September 1977, DMA, 6, 26. At no point was it overtly blamed on individuals, but rather on structures. This dichotomy is discussed by Jane Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), p. 1.
[388] Mills, Devitt Stocker, John Burnheim on General Philosophy, DMA, 6, 23.
[389] Mills, Devitt, Stocker to Burnheim, 30 August 1976, DMA, 6, 23.
[390] 'Marxist Caucus Replies', *Honi Soit*, 19 October 1976, p. 22; Statement of the Marxist Caucus, DMA, 6, 24.
[391] 'Why I Chose To Remain In General Philosophy', *Honi Soit,* 5 October 1976.
[392] John Burnheim, An Open Letter In Reply To 'Ruling and Ruining General Philosophy, 23 September 1976, DMA, 6, 23.

The 'gang of three' ascribed more influence to the Marxist caucus than they actually commanded. While it would be wrong to consider the democratic functioning of the department in a pluralistic sense, involving groups with competing interests debating on an equal playing field, the Marxist caucus was not omnipotent. Other affiliations existed, including a Women's Caucus and the Aristotelian Society, which functioned as a student caucus. One student emphasised the importance of the student caucus:

> As a rank and file student, I have felt intimidated by the democratic structure of our department. Of course no-one has tried to stop me speaking at departmental meetings (in fact normally I am encouraged to speak), [but] I am not confident.[393]

Membership was often overlapping, as demonstrated by the relationship between the Marxist and feminist caucuses. For instance, at this point in time, Curthoys considered herself both a Marxist and feminist, as the antipathies between the two systems of thought had not yet come into sharp relief.[394] The Women's caucus rejected the assertion by Stocker, Mills and Devitt that they had 'sold out' to the Marxist caucus and were merely an adjunct to whatever temporal alliance they had formed.[395] Instead, the caucus defended the department's democratic structure as vital in providing a platform to study feminism in a non-oppressive educational relationship.

Aside from the issue of cliques, Stocker, Devitt and Mills, rejected the educative function of participatory democracy in developing morally and psychologically adroit citizens. They stated that, 'We do not want to engage in it, to have our philosophical and personal lives tied up in it, we do not think that a university department is the proper place for expending our political energies.'[396] However, in response, the elected chairman of the Department of General Philosophy, Alan Chalmers supported the democratic attempt to give students an active role in their education as the process

[393] GP News no. 5, 25 October, 1976, DMA, 6, 23.
[394] John Burnheim, email correspondence.
[395] 'Women's Struggle Continues', *Honi Soit,* 12 October 1976.
[396] Devitt, Mills and Stocker, 'Ruling and Ruining General Philosophy', *Honi Soit*, 23 September 1973.

'renders university life vital and meaningful for many who would otherwise be alienated.' Similarly, Burnheim felt that the most important impact of democratisation was at the personal level:

> Few of us realise how riddled we are with uncriticised assumptions, false common sense and sheer confusions. One only discovers the limitations of one's self and others in the process of wrestling with real and concrete problems that don't fit one's assumptions, slogans and preferences.[397]

The defection of the 'Gang of Three' represents the first significant recognition within the department of the failure of participatory democracy to function effectively. The depth of their disillusionment is illustrated by the fact that these staff who were formally involved in both earlier radical activities within the university and supported democratisation within the department found it preferable to join the conservative staff of the Department of Traditional and Modern Philosophy with whom they had previously had a deeply antagonistic relationship.[398] Following a limited investigation by the Vice-Chancellor, the three successfully applied to transfer to the Department of Traditional and Modern Philosophy in 1977.[399]

Tensions eased slightly as a small number of new appointments were made in the Department of General Philosophy. However, by late 1979 the democratic functioning of the department had completely deteriorated. A split had developed between a core of Althusserians led by Suchting and a caucus of post-modernist feminists, led by Mia Campioni and Liz Grosz.[400] What little unity was left in the department was pushed to breaking point by the irrationalism of the latest 'frothy Parisian fashions', a reference to the thought of French poststructuralism.[401] Alan Chalmers found it increasingly difficult to negotiate between the 'Mad Anarchists, the French Trendies and the Dogmatic

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[397] What is this thing called General Philosophy? DMA, 6, 31.
[398] It must be recalled that Michael Devitt and Wal Suchting were the main protagonist in proposing the Marxism courses in 1971.
[399] 'Problems in the School of Philosophy', *University of Sydney News*, 9, no. 7, 18 April 1977.
[400] Jean Curthoys, email correspondence.
[401] John Burnheim, email correspondence.

Marxists.'[402] The accelerating theoretical disunity of the department contributed to the breakdown of democracy, as the intellectual difference was no longer seen as mutually beneficial to the intellectual development of individuals. Instead of antagonistic collaboration, it led factions to demonise those who thought differently.[403] Divisions within the department ossified and group ideology became a substitute for creative argument. In a parody of their former ideals, participants took on the task of oppressing themselves as conflict was driven underground and out of the deliberative sphere.

On October 15 1979, Alan Chalmers suspended the democratic constitution, with broad support from the majority of academic staff.[404] Chalmers refused to support destructive decisions made by whichever faction could successfully corral enough voting fodder at meetings for an ad hoc majority.[405] Over the ensuring year, despite multiple attempts, staff and students could not negotiate a new constitution that would avoid the pitfalls of the old while still maintaining meaningful representation and participation.[406] The Department of General Philosophy reverted to traditional mode of hierarchical governance. The radical experiment in participatory democracy had come to an end.

[402] Alan Chalmers, interview, 13 December 2010.
[403] This reflects Mansbridge's discussion of unitary and adversary democracy and the criticism of participatory democracy that although it functions when member's interests are fundamentally congruent, participatory democracy has no way of adjudicating conflicts when consensus breaks down. If minorities are not coerced to agree with the majority, then a stalemate is likely. Jane Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy*, p. viii.
[404] Alan Chalmers, Statement, October 1979; Denise Russell, Statement in support of Alan Chalmers, 16 October 1979; Statement by seven members of staff, 15 October 1979, DMA, 6, 33.
[405] Alan Chalmers, interview, 13 December 2010.
[406] Alan Chalmers, The Running of GP: The failure of attempts to devise an acceptable constitution, 26 June 1980; Alan Chalmers, Attempt to reinstitute a workable democracy, 30 May 1980, DMA, 6, 34.

Conclusion

A Failed Experiment?

The history of the Department of General Philosophy appears to confirm the view that participatory democracy is either destined to be institutionalised and thereby colonised by instrumental forms or doomed to collapse. Participatory democracy is seemingly bound by the 'iron law of oligarchy' in its specific manifestation as 'the tyranny of structurelessness.'[407] However, rather than viewing this history as derivative of ahistorical sociological tendencies, a more fruitful line of enquiry is to explore the reasons behind its demise in this particular instance. The most pertinent questions concern whether this resulted from external pressure or internal dysfunction.[408]

The explanations offered by the participants involved in the Department of General Philosophy are especially insightful. Following the suspension of the constitution and a return to a traditional style of departmental governance, the quality of reflective analysis by staff and students on the immediate events improved. There was no longer the burden of needing to justify their perspective in politically acceptable terms. Staff eschewed rhetoric in favour of speaking candidly on the problems of participatory democracy in the university.

A statement signed by a majority of staff, including those formerly in favour of democracy, posited three interrelated modes of explanation for why democracy had failed.[409] First, it examined the problems of a democratic organisation situated within a hierarchically structured institution. Secondly, the statement questioned problems internal to the constitution itself. The department's constitution failed to recognise that participatory theory is premised on the equality of power between constituents. However, equality was not apparent within the department due to the power relations between students

[407] Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (New York: The Free Press, 1961).
[408] Meta Mendel-Reyes, 'Self-Rule or Selves-Rule: A Problem in Democratic Theory and Practice, *Polity*, 32, no. 1 (1999), pp. 25-43.
[409] What was wrong with the old constitution, 19 March 1980. M.274 Records relating to various issues in the teaching of Philosophy, 1971-1985.

and their lecturers, who determined marks. The third explanation concerned problems with the manner in which the constitution was realised in practice, especially in 1979. In both theory and practice, the constitution failed to recognise the problems of an open constituency with over 600 members including 450 first year students. Unfortunately students did not 'fly to the assemblies' as Rousseau intended and very few students regularly turned up. Moreover, they were not a representative sample of enrolled students. The conclusion reached by all staff, including those previously in favour of an open franchise, was that the democratic structure of the department led to an inevitable conflict by granting dominant power to those who did not have to bear the consequences of their decisions. Staff had to implement the decisions proposed by first year students who dropped General Philosophy in their second year.

Another factor to consider is that many of the participants held conflicting views about the value of democracy. John Burnheim was perhaps the most ardent supporter of democracy as a civil value and means to building democratic citizens:

> My interest in the defence of democracy is, always has been and still is that it is the core of the intellectual and moral education. What I deplored was that we had no framework which pulled students into a genuinely democratic involvement.[410]

Although Burnheim did not agree entirely with a democratic model that favoured aggregative voting over meaningful deliberation, he felt that the experiment should be given a decent chance to prosper, as it was better than any authoritarian alternative.[411] While Burnheim held *de jure* powers as Head of General Philosophy, joking that students never pushed him too far because they knew he could just 'march across the quadrangle and tell Bruce Williams that he had had enough,' he rejected any

[410] John Burnheim, interview, 13 December 2010.
[411] Democracy?, 9 April, 1981, M.274. Burnheim noted that he was first and foremost a theorist, 'I was always a bit at sea in the situation because I was trying to deal with a lot of people who are by temperament activists.' [411] John Burnheim, interview, 13 December 2010. Indeed, Mills wrote to Burnheim during the 'Boat People Dispute', pointing to an idealism running through his answers. Mills to Burnheim, 7 October 1976, M. 274.

insinuation that he ever used the powers vested in him by the Vice-Chancellor and Senate.[412] Burnheim was deeply committed to the idea that decisions should be made by those who are affected by them. Ironically, it was this conviction, combined with the power accorded to him by the Vice-Chancellor, which significantly maintained the democratic functioning of the department.[413]

However, rather than building democratic and sustainable pedagogic practices, some radicals sought to use the department as a platform to launch further challenges on the administration. This perspective is best epitomised by Suchting, the leader of the Marxist caucus.[414] For Suchting, democracy was considered of no intrinsic importance, but rather a means to further the Marxist aim, with scant regard to the interests of others. Indeed, the perspective of Suchting is almost a personification of an agonistic challenge posed to Burnheim's deliberative conception of democracy, both in substance and form.[415]

The above discussion has favoured the reactions of staff primarily because their views were featured more in the historical record. The response by students to the retraction of their voting rights is more difficult to ascertain. Although there were some calls for protests and meetings, the reaction was largely mute, reflecting the general atmosphere of the late seventies.[416] The student mass had lost its revolutionary temper: the sixties were well and truly over.

Many students came to appreciate that their existence was too ephemeral for participation to alter their present circumstance. They were not fighting to decide educational matters for themselves, but for their successors. The political environment in the department only furthered the trend towards

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[412] John Burnheim, interview, 13 December 2010. Sybil Jack confirms this positive relationship, which was fostered during John Burnheim's presidency of the Sydney Association of University Teachers in 1972. Jack Sybil, *History of the Sydney Association of University Teachers 1943-1993* (Sydney: University of Sydney Printing Services, 1994), p. 135.

[413] The experience in General Philosophy led to Burnheim writing his own book on democratic theory, with very idiosyncratic proposals. John Burnheim, *Is Democracy Possible*? (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985).

[414] Although it should be noted that Suchting signed the previously discussed letter both in support of Chalmer's suspension of the constitution and the open letter analysing the problems of the old constitution. What was wrong with the old constitution', 19 March 1980, M.274; Statement by seven members of staff, 15 October 1979, DMA, 6, 33.

[415] Chantal Mouffe, 'For an agonistic model of democracy' in Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000).

[416] 'History of the GP Department', *Honi Soit,* 2 June 1980. Concerned Philosophy students called for a demonstration on the 5 March 1980. A poorly written historical poem was also distributed which placed blame on Alan Chalmers for taking control of the department. Honest Al's Philosophy Department, DMA, 6, 34.

increased apathy.[417] By late 1978, the general student body had become disillusioned with a department split between belligerent Althusserian and Feminist factions. As one article noted:

> Instead of a mass, there were individuals grouping together for a time, sometimes forming ad hoc majorities, but no longer "committed, unified and organised." Our t-shirts faded and we wore them less often.[418]

However, the same article did draw a distinction between student and staff interests. While radical students were pushing for further changes, staff retreated to their ivory tower to show that the ideas that they had fought for were capable of supporting academic work:

> But why is this such a sickening re-run of an old continental movie: why do we have to see the control of the democratic process pass yet gain into the hands of a small group, who are doing the theoretical work for us. The staff-machine came together, combated the hydra, but what has it now except itself? – and a film script for an epistemo-marxist revolution in tatters.[419]

The rise and fall of this radical experiment in participatory democracy is of significant interest to both the institutional history of Sydney University and to the history of student movements more generally. Yet it is also of further significance to democratic theory. Theorists rarely step down from an elevated position, which privileges the role of the state, and explore alternative empirical examples of 'actually existing democracy.' While it has not been the task of this thesis to sketch even the faintest outline of such a project, as long as these events are thoroughly historicised, it may be possible to learn something of how to deepen democracy and nurture democratic citizens, from the ephemeral success of this radical experiment in participatory democracy.

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[417] However, it is important to simply portray this period as being entirely quiescent. Arthur Levine and Keith Wilson, 'Student Activism in the 1970s: Transformation Not Decline', *Higher Education*, 8, no. 6 (1979), pp. 627-640.
[418] Franz Kafka, Adrian Diethl and Mark Booth, Some Thoughts on the Situation in GP, 1 November 1979, DMA, 6, 33.
[419] Ibid.

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