**POL 3013: SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**

**TUTORIAL 1: RHODES, SCHREINER AND MODERN SOUTH AFRICA**

The first tutorial deals with the political perspectives of Cecil Rhodes and Olive Schreiner around the beginning of the twentieth century, as the creation of a unified state and society in South Africa approached. In thinking about the questions below, you should not limit yourself to the passages extracted from their speeches here, and are encouraged to make use of other material in the course reading list.

“As to the question of voting, we say that the natives are in a sense citizens, but not altogether citizens—they are still children. And although we place them in individual positions with regard to certain pieces of agricultural land, we protect them by all sorts of laws. In so far as that land is concerned, the native has no right to claim a vote for it. And do it will be said that you are going to take away the vote from the poor native. But if those gentlemen who say they really wish to consider the welfare of these poor people, would think less about their votes, and more about their future, they would effect more. I know that these gentlemen talk much at missionary meetings about the poor natives, but I say to them, Try to do the natives some real good. . . .

What I have found is this, that we must give some gentle stimulus to these people to make them go on working. There are a large number of young men in these locations who are like younger sons at home, or if you will have it so, like young men about town. These young natives live in the native areas and locations with their fathers and mothers, and never do one stroke of work. But if a labour tax if 10 shillings were imposed, they would have to work. . . . These native young men are not in a position to marry and settle down, because they have not got cows. They are a nuisance to every district in the Transkei, to every magistrate in the Transkei, and to every location. We want to get hold of these young men and make them go out to work, and the only way to make them do this is to compel them to pay a certain labour tax. But we must prepare these people for the change. Every black man cannot have three acres and a cow, or four morgen and a commonage right. We have to face the question, and it must be brought home to them that in the future nine-tenths of them will have to spend their lives in daily labour, in physical work, in manual labour. This must be brought home to them sooner or later. There is nothing new in this.

. . . . I propose to use the labour tax for industrial schools and training. I propose that the neglect of labour should provide a fund for instruction in labour. . . . I have travelled through the Transkei, and have found some excellent establishments where the natives are taught Latin and Greek. They are turning out native parsons, most excellent persons, but the thing is overdone. I find that these people cannot find congregations for them. There are native parsons everywhere—they are turning them out by the dozen. They are turning out a dangerous class. They are excellent so long as the supply is limited, but the country is overstocked with them. These people will not go back to work, and that is why I say that the regulations of these industrial schools should be framed by the government; otherwise these native parsons would develop into agitators against the government.”

Cecil Rhodes, Speech on the Glen Grey Act, Cape Parliament, 30 July 1894, in Vindex, *Cecil Rhodes: His Political Life and Speeches, 1881-1900* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1900), pp. 380-83.

“For 200 years, Boer and Englishman, we have been populating and steadily taking possession of the land, moving steadily northwards. Our progress has not been made by a series of world-striking coups d’etat, it has been slow, but it has been the more healthy, the more sure, the more deeply rooted, because of its gradual and natural development. . . . The land as a whole has been kept free from many of those crushing evils which affect the older civilizations of Europe, and even affect some of the younger dependencies.

There is a sense in which we have been a poor people. We have had no mass of surplus wealth wrung from the labour of a working class, but we have been a very rich people, perhaps one of the richest on the earth, in the fact that grinding poverty, and the enormous and superfluous wealth of individuals, were equally unknown among us. Our people as a whole led a simple but comfortable life; our labouring classes were engaged in no unhealthy occupation; starvation and want were unknown among us; we were progressing steadily, if slowly, and keeping our national wealth for the people as a whole, and for all who should labour among us. . . .

But a new element has burst into South African life [Then follows Schreiner’s account of the rise of the monopolist, originally in diamonds and gold, then influencing politics and government, and expanding into Rhodesia under the British South African Company of Cecil Rhodes. In Rhodesia social life will conform to the needs of monopoly capital.]

The worst social diseases which afflict the old countries of Europe will make their appearance full grown in this virgin African land at the outset of its career. That unequal division of wealth, which bestows vast riches upon some individuals while the majority of the community are in abject poverty is, in those old countries, the outcome of institutions which are the growth of centuries, and is often softened by traditions binding the owners of wealth to the land itself, and those who labour on it. In these new territories no traditions will bind the owner to the land and soften his relations with the people; the financial possessors of the wealth of the country will exhibit on a colossal scale the worst evils of absentee ownership, or the possession of a country who regard land and people merely as a means for acquiring wealth.”

Olive Schreiner and S.C. Cronwright Schreiner, *The Political Situation* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1896), pp. 7-8, 16-17.

*Questions for discussion:*

1. How, if at all, are Rhodes’ racial policies linked to his stake in the emerging mining industry and his commitment to the spread of capitalism?

2. Rhodes implies that he, rather than the liberals, is trying to “do the natives some real good.” Assuming he is sincere in this, how will his policies lead to what is “good” for them? Will they also be good, in the same sense, for South African society as a whole?

3. How does Schreiner’s conception of what is good for South African society differ from that of Rhodes?