

<b>Institution: University of Nottingham</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 33 Theology and Religious Studies</b>
<b>Title of case study: SHAPING THE IDEOLOGY OF RED TORY AND BLUE LABOUR</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Professor John Milbank's research at the University of Nottingham has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influenced policy formation, as a crucial inspiration for the new 'postliberal' politics of Blue Labour and Red Toryism in the United Kingdom;</li> <li>• Influenced the theological discourse of Anglican and Catholic churches here and abroad;</li> <li>• Contributed to changes in theological education through becoming an object of study in theological curricula as well as an object of debate among other disciplines such as political and social theory.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Milbank's research over the past three decades has developed a critique of secular political and social theory and practice, as well as a new theory of the nature of Christian politics: this has become one of the most influential approaches in contemporary theology through <i>Theology and Social Theory</i> (1990, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2006) and the Radical Orthodoxy movement [3.3]. Developing this approach, he has argued in more recent papers that there is in reality no theologically neutral social theory or practice. Both 'right' and 'left' in political terms are essentially secular categories which assume a foundation of either isolated individual freedom or the manipulation of impersonal force. What is omitted is a civil economy grounded in mutual benefit as well as competition, gift as well as contract, vocation as well as employment, and communal celebration as well as labour – all underpinned by a theological conception of the common good.</p> <p>Milbank was appointed as Professor of Religion, Politics and Ethics at the University of Nottingham in 2004 as part of a strategic campaign to attract world-changing researchers; specifically, his task was to launch and direct the Centre of Theology and Philosophy. In this role, Milbank has sought to apply his theological vision to contemporary political institutions. At the heart of his work is this research question: 'Why do we have a lack of social justice under the present political system?' He has concluded that this has to do with the public dominance of secularist notions: the essential collusion of both right and left in their shared commitment at once to atomic or collectivist individualism and at the same time, to impersonalism, has become apparent in the shift to a market state. Milbank proposes that the challenge to this new conjuncture has to come from religion, which alone is capable of resisting the desecralisation of people and nature upon which a secular and oligarchic politics and economics ultimately rests. He has therefore developed a postliberal 'politics of paradox' which seeks to combine realising the maximum flourishing of all with a hierarchic educational guidance towards virtue. This would effectively recover a genuine Christian 'socialism' which cannot be placed on a right-left spectrum. In conclusion, an incisive summary of Milbank's research has been given by the Labour Party's head of policy:</p> <p>'Over the last decade, his writings have combined a critique of secular liberalism and capitalism with an alternative political vision. Milbank's particular contribution centres on a Christian socialism that appears paradoxical in terms of current political divisions -- blending demands for greater economic justice with a renewed sense of the importance of social tradition, locality and personal honour. He was one of the first to argue that right-wing economic liberalism and leftwing cultural liberalism are two halves of the same picture, and to propose instead a more associationist and teleological approach in both domains, focussed upon an attempt to achieve greater human flourishing. ... Building on Polanyi, Milbank has put forward original ideas about how to re-embed the global 'market-state' into the 'complex space' of intermediary institutions and the social bonds and civic ties they uphold -- a vision that has, directly and indirectly, influenced the Labour Party's thinking about the 'Good Society' in general and welfare reform in particular.' [5.8]</p>

Milbank's research on politics at Nottingham has been developed initially through a series of papers given through an extensive, frequent, and prolonged series of speaking engagements worldwide, from Mexico to the Ukraine, in academic settings both inside and outside theology, in church settings, and in political meetings. To facilitate Milbank's research, the department has supported him as a research professor relieved of undergraduate teaching and administration. Many of the key papers have been developed into journal articles or book chapters, including 'Liberality versus Liberalism', in *The Future of Love* [3.2] – his inaugural lecture at Nottingham, his contributions to *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader* [3.3], 'Culture and Justice' [3.4], 'A Real Third Way' [3.5], and 'Against Human Rights' [3.6]. While many further existing papers are still to be collected in a volume entitled *Geopolitical Theology*, his narrative of the historical co-development of theology and political theory has just been published as *Beyond Secular Order* [3.1].

### 3. References to the research

- [1] *Beyond Secular Order: theology, philosophy and political theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2013) [listed in REF 2].
- [2] *The Future of Love* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11 and 12 [available on request].
- [3] *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader* co-ed with Simon Oliver (London: Routledge 2009), with Simon Oliver, Chapter 12, 338-362 and 'Afterword', 367-404 [available on request].
- [4] 'Culture and Justice' in *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol 27, No 6, Nov. 2010, 107-124. (There is an interview with him in the same issue.) <http://tcs.sagepub.com/content/27/6/107.full.pdf+html>
- [5] 'A Real Third Way' in *The Crisis of Global Capitalism: Pope Benedict XVI's Social Encyclical and the Future of Political Economy*, ed. Adrian Pabst (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2010), pp. 27-70 [available on request].
- [6] 'Against Human Rights: Liberty in the Western Tradition' in *The Oxford Journal of Law and Theology*, March 2012 [listed in REF2].

#### Evidence of quality:

Several of the above items have been submitted as outputs to REF2014. Evidence of the quality of the research is given by the number of invitations he receives to deliver keynote papers and prestigious lectures, such as the Stanton Lectures Series in Cambridge in 2011.

### 4. Details of the impact

#### Influencing policy formation via 'Red Tory' and 'Blue Labour' movements:

Milbank's research has proposed a religious politics that would invert our present right-wing economic and left-wing cultural politics for a more conservative set of social values and a more radical economic system based on community, reciprocity and the common good. He proposed that such a 'paradoxical politics' would be 'red tory' or blue socialist'. [5.1] Both of these labels, along with the full range of ideas that underwrite them, have been carried forward into the mainstream of British politics.

Phillip Blond, Director of ResPublica (an independent, non-partisan, and not for profit think-tank) and author of *Red Tory: How Left and Right have Broken Britain and How we Can Fix It* (London: Faber, 2010), is a former doctoral student of Milbank's who has developed his political ideas (since leaving a lectureship in theology in 2008) in constant conversation with Milbank, whose influence can be seen on many pages of *Red Tory* and in many ResPublica reports [see 5.2 & 5.3]. Blond himself has been described as 'the man who wrote Cameron's mood music' (*Guardian*, 8<sup>th</sup> August 2009) and the 'driving force behind David Cameron's "Big Society" agenda' (*Daily Telegraph*, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2010). Blond writes:

'In terms of my own work as Director of ResPublica (one of Britain's most influential thinktanks) where John [Milbank] is Chair of Trustees, I always discuss my own and our public and policy-led approach with him. It would not be an exaggeration to say that inasmuch as I have

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influenced British public life with ideas on anything like Red Tory, The Big Society and Military Academies - I have always drawn on John's work and advice when formulating ideas and policy.' [5.4]

Lord Maurice Glasman has taken up the 'blue socialist' agenda under the heading 'blue labour', as one of the key intellectual movements influencing the current policy of the Labour Party under Ed Milliband. He was quickly promoted to a peerage soon after he took up and propagated Milbank's 'blue socialism': the story of Milbank's influence and Glasman's ascent has been documented by the journalist Rowenna Davis, *Tangled Up in Blue*. [5.5] Lord Glasman writes:

'Professor John Milbank has had a profound impact on the political position that has come to be known as Blue Labour. He spent some very important time with me and urged me to "think paradoxically" and that has been a very significant feature of the academic and political work. A seminar was created at Oxford University called "The Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox" which generated 120,000 downloads in a week when it was published as an ebook by Lawrence and Wishart [5.6]. Since then, the ideas of Professor Milbank have informed a range of debates and policy initiatives within the Labour movement from welfare reform to foreign policy.' [5.7]

Similarly, Jon Cruddas MP, Labour Party Policy Coordinator, writes:

John Milbank is one of the main thinkers behind the emerging post-liberal politics in Britain. ... His thinking has influenced in equal measure the Red Tory project of Phillip Blond and the Blue Labour movement founded by Maurice Glasman. Blue Labour's work on an ethical market, a mutualist approach to welfare and a focus on vocationalism for all rather than just equality of opportunity, has been considerably shaped by Milbank's work and so, through the impact of Blue Labour, has in turn influenced debates within the Labour Party, including the Policy Review. Moreover, he has made public interventions in the mainstream media and at public conferences in which he has developed his own brand of Christian socialism. It can be summarised as a post-liberal, post-secular politics that overcomes both neo-liberal capitalism and authoritarian statism in the direction of a civic polity and a civil economy. ... By arguing for the primacy of the social and the ethical over the political and the economic, Milbank has helped to redefine the battleground of ideas in British politics. [5.8]

Milbank was invited to chair the ResPublica Trust to redirect it towards being a non-party-political charity dedicated to postliberal politics in general and with close links to religious bodies, Christian and non-Christian. He has also addressed a meeting at the House of Lords on this topic in relation an alternative version of Lords' reform on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2012, launching the ResPublica publication to which he contributed, *Our House: Reflections on Representation and Reform in the House of Lords* [5.2], alongside, amongst others, the Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform. This was instrumental in inspiring the Alternative Proposal published and promoted by a number of members of the Joint Committee for the House of Lords Reform Draft Bill, arguing that the Second Chamber should embody a participative democracy and reflect the diversity of communities in the country beyond political and regional divides [5.9].

Milbank has also stimulated interest in and contributed to public awareness of moral issues in party politics: he appeared on BBC Radio 4's *The Moral Maze*: 8pm 2 December 2009 'The moral significance of science in political and moral debate in society'; 8pm 4 July 2012: 'Moral leadership and public virtue in light of the bank crisis'. Eight articles he contributed on his political thinking to ABC online between March 2012 and May 2013 generated significant engagement and debate with 1,031 Likes on Facebook, 303 Re-Tweets. Of 370 comments, those generated by his essay after the death of Thatcher include: 'an outstanding contribution to the debate', and 'I don't often agree with John Milbank, but this essay is superb' [5.10]. Complementing this media engagement with his work, Milbank participates in regular public debate. Recent examples include: a debate on gay marriage, Westminster Hall, London, 18 April 2013; a conference on religion and democracy, Collège des Bernardins, Paris, 20 April 2013; a debate on Robert & Edward Skidelsky's book, *How Much is Enough? Money and the Good Life*, House of Lords, 23 April 2013; Blue Labour Midlands

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seminar, 5 July 2013; seminar for Demos think tank 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, 'Making markets moral', 17 July 2013. The themes of these events reflect Milbank's engagement with a diverse range of constituencies, and the application of his research to wide-ranging contemporary political, philosophical and theological debate.

### Influencing church social teaching

Religious bodies have been attracted by his finding that a notion of the common good needs a notion of objective values held in common and by his call for an inherently moral market in the article, 'A Real Third Way' in *The Crisis of Capitalism*, based on talks given to many church audiences [5.13]. Of his many other talks to church audiences [5.11], his addresses to the international *Communion and Liberation* Catholic lay movement have been particularly influential: his talk to several thousand at their annual meeting in Italy (Rimini, August 2008) led to subsequent annual invitations (2009-13), interviews for their journal *Traces* and *Foundation for Subsidiarity*, a talk to their subsidiarity movement of business people in Milan (March 2012) and a seminar in the hémicycle of the European Parliament ('National States within the European Polity' 16 December 2009). Milbank's research on the common good has also involved a valuing of the churches themselves as co-ordinators and creators of community, which has led the Church of England to commission a report on the role of churches in society from ResPublica, *Holistic Mission*, launched jointly by the Minister for Civil Society, Nick Hurd MP, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, 10 July 2013 [5.3]: the influence of Milbank is seen throughout the report.

### Contributing to theological curricula on an international scale

The Radical Orthodoxy movement is widely studied in theological curricula at universities worldwide. Its influence has been summarised by Melanie Newman in her article on the movement in *THES* 16<sup>th</sup> April 2009: 'A revival of interest in theology is evident in academic and political debate, and John Milbank and the radical orthodoxy movement are spreading the news' [5.12]. The production of *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader* (coedited with Simon Oliver, also at Nottingham) within the REF period has facilitated this impact.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [1] 'Red Toryism in the best hope of a new progressive politics', Milbank's letter to the Guardian, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2008.
- [2] *Our House: Reflections on Representation and Reform in the House of Lords*, ResPublica report, 29 February 2012. Available at: <http://respublica.org.uk/item/Our-House-Reflections-on-Representation-and-Reform-in-the-House-of-Lords>
- [3] *Holistic Mission: Social Action and the Church of England*, ResPublica report, 10 July 2013. Available at: <http://www.respublica.org.uk/item/Holistic-Mission-Social-action-and-the-Church-of-England-gkvx>
- [4] Rowenna Davis, *Tangled up in Blue: Blue Labour and the Struggle for Labour's Soul* (London: Ruskin Publishing, 2011), 16-17; see also 'Blue Labour is still the rising philosophy of Ed Miliband's party', Rowenna Davis, *The New Stateman* 30<sup>th</sup> September 2012.
- [4] Director, ResPublica, Phillip Blond; supporting statement available on request.
- [5] Rowenna Davis, *Tangled up in Blue: Blue Labour and the Struggle for Labour's Soul* (London: Ruskin Publishing, 2011), 16-17; see also 'Blue Labour is still the rising philosophy of Ed Miliband's party', Rowenna Davis, *The New Stateman* 30<sup>th</sup> September 2012.
- [6] Maurice Glasman, Jonathan Rutherford, Marc Stears and Stuart White (eds), 'The Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox: The Oxford London Seminars 2010-11'. *Soundings Journal*, 2011. Available at: <http://www.soundings.org.uk/>
- [7] Labour life peer, Baron Glasman; supporting statement available on request.
- [8] Labour Party Policy Coordinator, Shadow Cabinet, John Cruddas MP; supporting statement available on request.
- [9] Head of Research at ResPublica (statement available on file)
- [10] Indicative examples of social, print and broadcast media engagement (available on file)
- [11] Indicative examples of talks to church audiences (available on file)
- [12] 'Lazarus-style comeback', Melanie Newman, *THES* 16<sup>th</sup> April 2009.
- [13] The Guardian columnist, and Vicar of St Mary, Newington. (statement available on file).