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BIOGRAPHY

Janine Brodie holds the Canada Research Chair in Political Economy and Social Governance at the University of Alberta. She earned a PhD in Political Science at Carleton University in 1981, a year after accepting her first teaching position at Queen's University. In 1982, Dr. Brodie went to York University where within a decade she was appointed full professor, Faculty Fellow of the Institute for Social Research, inaugural director of the York Centre for Feminist Research, and John Robarts Chair in Canadian Studies. Dr. Brodie also held the University of Western Ontario's Visiting Chair in Public Policy in 1995. From 1997 to 2004, she chaired the Department of Political Science at the University of Alberta. In 2002, Dr. Brodie was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in recognition of "the breadth of her scholarship and the strength of her academic leadership." Currently, she serves as director of the Royal Society's Academy II Division 1. In 2011, the University of Alberta appointed her to the rank of Distinguished University Professor.

Dr. Brodie's research critically engages many of the core challenges in Canadian politics and public policy: citizenship, gender equality, political representation, social policy, globalization, and contemporary transformations in governance. Her influential and innovative work in these areas is substantial and extensive. To date, she has written or co-written eight books and edited or co-edited three others. Dr. Brodie publishes in a wide range of national and international scholarly journals and has written some 75 book chapters, most recently investigating the multiple and complex effects of neoliberal governing practices on citizenship, social equity, and

national governance. She co-edits *Critical Concepts*, an introductory political science text now in its fifth edition that has been widely adopted by political science departments across Canada. Dr. Brodie's current research focuses on contemporary social policies, provincial anti-poverty strategies, and challenges to democratic citizenship. She was named a Trudeau fellow in 2010.

ABSTRACT

This text explores the relationship between social literacy, social justice, and the social sciences, historically and in the contemporary era of financial insecurity and public austerity. Ongoing financial crises have undermined the legitimacy of the market-friendly governing assumptions, which have informed policy making for more than a generation. Citizens and their governments have entered unchartered waters, but pervasive uncertainty has not dampened popular demands for equity, voice, and social justice, in fact, these have intensified. The social sciences have been too timid in entering public debates in these uncertain times. They have been remarkably successful, however, in demonstrating the social and political costs of income disparities, financial insecurity, and social inequality, three critical markers of this moment. The social sciences have a great deal to say about just societies amid the growing uncertainties of the early 21st century. It is time for social science to rediscover its original mission of imagining better societies and, with robust critique and social research, opening windows on different choices about what is equitable, politically possible, and socially responsible.

LECTURE

"Social Literacy and Social Justice in Times of Crisis"

Organized in partnership with the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences and Congress 2012 (Big Thinking Lecture Series)

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Introduction

The question of "Scholarship for an Uncertain World"—the theme of Congress 2012—is a pressing one for the humanities and social sciences.[1] This is an uncertain world that is unsettled by multiple and overlapping crises—economic, political, social, cultural, and environmental. We also live in an insecure and fearful world, fear born of loss of employment, fear of losing ground, fear of not being able to make ends meet, and fear of losing social programs, and, especially, fear that our governments have lost control of forces they do not fully understand.[2]

These crises are typically the conceptual and research terrains of the humanities and the social sciences, but our vocations are increasingly under attack. They are under attack from within our universities. Our governments discredit and ignore us as does the popular media. Some of the criticisms levelled against us are well taken, an issue that I will take up later in my lecture. The contemporary assault

1. I would like to express my deep thanks to Suzan Minosos for her careful reading of an earlier draft of this lecture, to Véronique Dassas for the translation, and to Bettina Cenerelli for her care in editing this paper.

2. Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land* (New York: Penguin Press, 2010), 217.

on social knowledge, I argue today, is a symptom of the economic and political crises that now engulf advanced democracies.

Social innovators, social scientist, and equity seekers may be relegated to the sidelines of policy debates and their arguments, dismissed as unscientific, self-interested, and a threat to economic growth, but the genie, it seems to me, is out of the bottle. The social sciences and humanities find themselves in an intellectual and political space that they have not encountered in generations, certainly not since the Great Depression. Then, as now, scholarship for an uncertain world was charged with the task of revealing the hazards and interests that lurk in the shadows of common sense. Today I will address the scope of our uncertain world and outline what I call *social ways of seeing* the problems that confront us. Next, I place contemporary critiques of the academy within context, focusing particularly on the blame game being played out in the current political climate of Canada and on what I call the active production of social illiteracy. And, finally, I will return to the theme of this conference—scholarship *for* an uncertain world.

An Uncertain World

We are now five years into the longest, deepest, and most widespread economic contraction since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Like people in the '30s, we continue to stare into what Roosevelt called a vast "frontier of insecurity of human want and fear."[3] And, like our predecessors, we do not know when, how, or what kind of recovery will eventually gain traction. After massive public bailouts of global financial institutions and hefty public borrowing to stimulate economic growth and rounds of tax cutting, primarily for the rich and corporations, plus historically low interest rates, and, yes, stark

3. Quoted in Jacob Hacker, *The Great Risk Shift: The New Economic Insecurity and the Decline of the American Dream* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008; revised edition), 43.

austerity programs, there are depressingly few signs of recovery. Our youth face a future in which they will be less likely than their parents' generation to earn to decent wage or to have a secure job or employment benefits or own a home. As it stands, the present global economic crisis denies the next generation the promise of social mobility, which is so critical to the implicit social contract of liberal democracies.

When the global economy began to implode in August 2007 with the American mortgage meltdown, there was a loud public clamour demanding that the perpetrators, many residing in the gilded corridors of Wall Street, be held accountable. Governments, so the cry went up, ought to regulate the financial sector to prevent future global crises. As they did in the early years of the Great Depression, governments ignored the growing liabilities of the prevailing economic orthodoxy, preferring to interpret the deep global shock as a temporary setback rather than as a systemic crisis. G8 and G20 leaders implemented a series of "restoration strategies," designed to stabilize the existing system and get on with "business as usual."[4] The optimists believed that "prosperity [was] just around the corner," echoing the unrealized aspirations of American president Herbert Hoover in 1932.[5] Then as now, prosperity has proved elusive and, looking at the first quarter of 2012, even the pessimists are depressed.

Five years into the quagmire, business is far from usual. So-called green shoots of recovery have withered on the vine. We see slowing Asian markets, ever harsher austerity programs, stubbornly high levels of unemployment, growing income inequality, and an ill-contained European debt crisis, which continues to teeter on the

4. John Clarke, "What Crisis Is This?", in *Soundings on the Neoliberal Crisis,* Jonathan Rutherford and Sally Davison (London: Soundings, 2012), 44-54; here 44.

5. History Learning Site, "Wall Street Crash of 1929 and its aftermath," http://HistoryLearningSite.co.uk/wall_street_crash.htm.

edge of what the head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) obliquely referred to as a "1930s moment."[6] In Spain and Greece, for example, official unemployment rates are now in the range in 24 percent, reaching almost 50 percent among people under 25 years of age. In the United States, the full extent of under- and unemployment is unknown because official statistics do not count those who have quit looking for a job, but other studies estimate that jobless rates, especially among African Americans, have climbed to depression-like levels.[7]

Canadians feel shielded somewhat from the most egregious consequences the Great Recession. Yet, in an increasingly complex and interdependent global economy, Canada is neither protected nor immune from trouble. In fact, Canada has many of the precarious markers of this era. Income inequality is growing more quickly here than in the United States and surpasses levels set in the 1920s; personal debt has never been higher; savings have never been lower; and un- and underemployment are stubbornly high, especially in former manufacturing hubs and among the young, the racialized, and newcomers. This says nothing about those who, at the stroke of a government or corporate pen, find themselves without a paycheque.

In his recent book, *End This Depression Now*, Nobel laureate Paul Krugman argues that advanced economies are now mired in a depression, perhaps not a full replay of the Great Depression of the 1930s, but qualitatively similar to that last lost decade.[8] Krugman finds similarities in the depth and extent of hardship exacted on the working people, in the duration of the crisis, and in the wrongheadedness of orthodox economic austerity programs. Krugman's

6. Quoted in Bruce Campbell, "Massive public investment needed to avert a deep slump," *CCPA Monitor* 2012, 18, no. 9 (2012), 39.

7. Paul Krugman, *End This Depression Now* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012).

8. Idem.

analysis is firmly situated in mainstream economics, admittedly of the Keynesian rather than Friedman variety. He appeals to governments to be mindful of the lessons learned in the 1930s, specifically that government austerity programs only promise to further depress already depressed economies and to prolong the crisis. Instead of squeezing budgets, he argues, governments should focus on creating jobs and building public infrastructure. Governments should tackle debt reduction after the worst of the storm has passed. In April 2012, the IMF, once a bastion of neoliberal orthodoxy, also urged governments to go easy on austerity programs, arguing that "austerity alone cannot treat the economic malaise in the major advanced economies."[9] Britain's recent slide into a double-dip recession and the growing recessionary wave across an austerity-focused EU underscore the point the IMF is making.

The current era is qualitatively similar to the early 1930s, eerily so, in other important respects we ignore only at our peril. As Karl Polanyi argued in his enduring analysis of the Great Depression and the rise of European fascism, market governance was always a utopian experiment that tore at the "human and natural substance of society." Allowed to persist, "it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness." "Inevitably," he observed, "society took measures to protect itself."[10] In *The Great Transformation*, Polanyi describes how the dying days of laissez-faire saw the "spontaneous eruption" of all manner of counter movements, ranging from fascism to communism to social liberalism, each with its own analysis of how society should be protected and, just as important, from whom. It took almost two decades of grinding despair, fascist genocide, and a world war to finally build a

9. Quoted in "Too much austerity will be damaging, IMF," *The Guardian*, April, 17, 2012. http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2012/apr/17/too-much-austerity-damaging-imf

10. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Times* (New York: Beacon Press, 2001; first published 1944), 3.

consensus around a new regime of social protection variously called the postwar settlement, the welfare state, or social liberalism.

While history does not repeat itself measure for measure, Polanyi's work reminds us that the failure of the governing paradigm unleashes myriad alternative prognoses and social imaginaries, some progressive, some regressive, and some pathological. The Indignants in Spain, the Occupy Wall Street movement, the Quebec student strike, the retail riots in the United Kingdom, the American Tea Party, and the rising popularity of xenophobic nationalism as expressed by the National Front in France, or the Golden Dawn in Greece, are examples of counter movements. Their shared analysis is that the system is broken. Political elites cannot or will not fix the problem. "Ordinary people," variously defined, need protection,[11] but they are not getting it. This message resonates more and more widely in the general public. They feel that no matter how hard they or their children try, they can no longer get ahead, in effect, that the system is rigged against them.[12] This is a volatile mix. All of us have a deep and critical investment in how the question of societal protection is resolved in the early 21st century.

The unravelling of elite consensus on the dominant governing paradigm provides another touchstone to the 1930s, and offers us perhaps the most persuasive evidence that we are approaching a tipping point in governing philosophies. As stated, there is growing disagreement inside mainstream economics about whether austerity or stimulus is the best way to respond to the Great Recession. This debate has now found its way into European party systems. Internationally, financial institutions and prominent economists, who once championed market governance, now actively disavow its

11. J. David Hulchaski, "The 99% Know All About Inequality," *Toronto Star*, October 25, 2011, www.thestar.com/opinion/editorialopinion/article/1075921--the-99-know-all-about-inequality

12. Robert Reich, *Beyond Outrage: What Has Gone Wrong with Our Economy and Our Democracy and How to Fix it* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 524.

core assumptions and outcomes. An early stray from the fold, Nobel Prize winner and former World Bank economist Joseph Stiglitz, argues we have been governed by "a grab-bag of ideas based on the fundamentalist notion that markets are self-correcting, allocate resources effectively, and serve the public interest well." This grab-bag, he continues, was always "a political doctrine serving certain interests," and it was never supported either by "economic theory" or "by historical experience." "Learning this lesson," he says, "may be the silver lining in the cloud now hanging over the global economy."[13] Jeffrey Sachs, another astray from the fold, argues that the greatest illusion of market governance was that "a healthy society could be organized around the single-minded pursuit of wealth." This illusion has generated a moral crisis, leaving American society "deprived of the benefits of social trust, honesty, and compassion."[14]

The World Economic Forum (WEF) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), two influential organizations that have served as hubs for the propagation of market governance for a generation, also appear to have changed their minds. The WEF's 2012 *Global Risks Report*, warns of a "dystopian future for much of humanity," explaining with uncharacteristic humility that "dystopia describes what happens when attempts to build a better world go wrong." The report envisions a future marked by chronic and large levels of unemployment, especially among youth. It predicts that indebted governments will be unable to honour social contracts with citizens. It warns about the growth of nationalism and populism, and the emergence of what it terms as "critical fragile states."[15] Critical fragile states are formerly wealthy

13. Joseph E. Stiglitz, "The End of Neo-liberalism?"(2008), http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/the-end-of-neo-liberalism

14. Jeffrey Sachs, *The Price of Civilization: Economics and Ethics After the Fall* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2011), 3, 9.

15. World Economic Forum, *Global Risks Report:* Seventh Edition (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2012), 10; 16-19, http://www.weforum.org.

countries that will "descend into lawlessness and unrest" because they cannot meet their social and fiscal obligations. Critical fragile states fail to create opportunities for the young, reduce intergenerational inequalities, and/or tackle severe income disparities.[16]

In December 2011, the Secretary General of the OECD, Angel Gurria, unveiled *Divided We Stand*, a scathing report on neoliberalism. He explained how our winner-take-all culture has created deeply rooted social imbalances and pervasive fears of decline in the middle class. Inequality, he explained, is now a live political issue that threatens both economic recovery and social cohesion. He stressed that "the benefits of economic growth DO NOT trickle down automatically," and that "greater inequality DOES NOT foster social mobility." "Our policies," Gurria concluded, "have created a system that makes [inequalities] grow and it's time to change these policies." *Divided We Stand* recommended a new policy agenda, focused specifically on the employment of unrepresented groups, tax reform, and reinvestment in education, health, and family care. Gurria reminded member countries that income redistribution is "at the core of responsible governance" and that "addressing the question of fairness is the sine qua non for the necessary restoring of confidence today." For the OECD, it was time to "Go Social."[17]

Social Ways of Seeing

The idea of "going social" is a formative thread weaving through the development of both liberal democracies and the social sciences. The word "social" is now widely deployed as an adjective to identify a field of thought and action that has something to do with society. We tend to assume that the idea of the social has always been with us,

16. Ibid., 16.

17. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Divided We Stand: Why Inequality Keeps Rising," Remarks by Angel Gurria, OECD Secretary General, Paris, December 5, 2011, http://www.oecd.org/social/dividedwestandwhyinequalitykeepsrisingspeech.htm

but it is a relatively recent human invention, which is intimately tied to the intellectual and political history of modernity. Enlightenment thinkers began to use the social as a "vital descriptor" of human uniqueness and community, which marked "man" and the human condition off from fate, nature, and the transcendental. As Polanyi described, "people began to explore the meaning of life in a complex society."[18] But it was pauperism, in particular, that "fixed attention on the incomprehensible fact that poverty seemed to go with plenty." This revelation, Polanyi noted, was "as powerful as that of the most spectacular events of history."[19] "Social, not technical invention," he explained, "was the intellectual mainspring of the Industrial Revolution."[20] In the process of industrialization, capitalist societies began to develop a "moral imagination."[21]

By the mid-19th century, the idea of the social was shaped into a powerful transformative impulse when critical thinkers introduced the term social problem into the political lexicon. This term opened spaces for new ways of representing and intervening in the politics of industrialization. The idea of *le problem social* was attributed to the unequal distribution of wealth and power in early industrial capitalism, animating the 1848 revolution in France. New formulae for solving social problems began to appear in leaflets and the policy platforms of continental social democratic parties, and informed the essays of leading thinkers such as John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx.[22] The social thus became a distinctive idiom in the formative moments of modern democracies and the social sciences. The initial

18. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (2001), 88-9.

19. Ibid., 89.

20. Ibid., 124.

21. Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of Late Victorians* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

22. Janine Brodie, "Rethinking the Social in Social Citizenship," in *Rethinking the Social in Citizenship*, ed. E. Isin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 22-50.

professional mission of the social sciences was to find some order "in the broken fragments of modernity, and to salvage the promise of progress."[23] Although we currently are dubious about the promises of modernity, the social sciences originated in the desire to make society better, and this mission has been an invariable factor in their evolution ever since.[24]

Social scientists have introduced such core concepts as alienation, mobility, stratification, inequality, and human rights into the political lexicon, gradually but progressively setting the foundations for what Margaret Somers has recently termed a "sociologically-driven knowledge culture."[25] From the outset, this knowledge culture did not and could not separate the scholarly from the moral enterprise.[26] The social sciences challenged hierarchy, fatalism, and ignorance, and generated new social imaginaries about the possibilities of democratic governance.[27]

This social way of seeing crystalized during the 1930s. The years leading up to the crash of 1929, similar to the contemporary period, were marked by profound income inequalities. Social scientists such as R.H. Tawney were among the first to ring the warning bells about the social and political liabilities of inequality. In *Equality*, first published in 1931, Tawney argued that democracy is an inherently unstable form of government unless it also is committed to the elimination of all forms of special privilege and to the taming of

23. Michael Burawoy, "2004 Presidential Address: For Public Sociology," *American Sociological Review* 70 (2005), 4-28; here 5.

24. Zygmunt Bauman, *Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011), 160.

25. Margaret Somers, *Genealogies of Citizenship: Markets, Statelessness, and the Right to Have Rights* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3.

26. Burawoy, "2004 Presidential Address: For Public Sociology" (2005), 6.

27. Gerard Delanty, *Social Science: Beyond Constructivism and Realism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 25.

economic power.[28] As the depression drew on, he admonished those still clinging to the economic orthodoxy of the day:

> Innocent laymen are disposed to believe that [the] monstrosities [of inequality], though morally repulsive, are economically advantageous, and that, even were they not, the practical difficulties of abolishing them are too great to be overcome… The burden of proof rests today, not in the critics of economic and social inequalities… but on their defenders.[29]

During these same years, Lord Beveridge, capturing the mood of Charles Dickens, wrote about the Five Giant Evils of market governance—squalour, ignorance, want, idleness, and disease. Commissioned to provide a framework for the British social state in 1940, the Beveridge Report recommended an extensive network of social insurance programs for families, the unemployed, health care, and housing.[30] In Canada, the Depression years similarly motivated social scientists to critically engage in discourses of renewal. As historian Doug Owram recounts, social scientists did the lion's share of intellectual work during these dark years.[31] In 1932, academics at McGill University and the University of Toronto, among them Frank Underhill, F.R. Scott, and Eugene Forsey, launched the League for Social Reconstruction to foster research and advance public education about the Depression. The threads of this early intellectual work eventually wove through the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation's Regina Manifesto, the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, and the Marsh Report.

Leonard Marsh, a former student of Lord Beveridge and graduate of the London School of Economics, came to Canada in 1930

28. R.H. Tawney, *Equality* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931), 30.

29. Ibid., 26; preface to 1939 edition.

30. Nicholas Timmins, *The Five Giants: A Bibliography of the Welfare State* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001).

31. Doug Owram, *The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State, 1900–1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

after being hired as director of social research at McGill University, where he conducted pivotal research on unemployment and economic mobility. His 1943 report to the federal government provided the founding blueprint for Canadian postwar social policy. It embodied "the basic lessons to be learned from the thirties,"[32] not only in Canada but across all liberal democracies. "The only rational way to cope with the large and complicated problem of the insecurities of working and family life," the report explained, "is by recognizing and legislating for particular categories or areas of risk and need."[33] Anticipating resistance to the idea of social insurance, Marsh explained that "too much emphasis is placed on the second word [insurance] and too little on the first word of the phrase [social]." "The basic soundness of social insurance," the report emphasized, "is that it is underwritten by the community as a whole."[34]

Postwar social welfare regimes were simply one translation of the sociologically driven knowledge culture that took root in that period and, as feminist, critical race, and Aboriginal scholars have since established, the ambitions of social liberalism were never fully achieved and never without their own internal tensions and inequalities.[35] Public policies, by definition, are fields of power that enforce and reproduce gendered, racial, and cultural hierarchies, and historical understandings of the normal and the abnormal. The prevailing knowledge culture, however, provided a language and a literacy to contest those fields of power: the promise of equality and social security opened new political spaces for the excluded to make claims to equality and security.[36] The humanities and social sciences played

32. Leonard Marsh, *Report on Social Security for Canada* (1943), 9.

33. Idem.

34. Marsh, *Report on Social Security for Canada* (1943), 11.

35. Hacker, *The Great Risk Shift* (2008), xvi.

36. Janine Brodie, "Reforming Social Justice in Neoliberal Times," *Studies in Social Justice* 2, no. 1 (2007), 93-107.

a key role in generating a new moral consensus[37] and building social literacy in a previous era similar to our own.

Social literacy does not refer to a particular set of postwar social policies but to the core commitments that inspire collective strategies of social protection. If you Google "social literacy," you will find that there is a field of research devoted to the promotion of sociability and emotional intelligence in children. I use the term somewhat differently to describe a particular political and ethical orientation to our collective relational capacities. The "social" in social literacy is irreducibly relational, as Geertz puts it, "all the way down"[38] while "literacy" refers to proficiency in a particular way of seeing and a particular kind of knowledge. We can see social literacy operating in an individual's reading of a situation (her daughter's unemployment), in political party platforms or the manifestos of protest movements that force the question "what is government for?"and in the dense text of bureaucratic reports and legislation, which are premised on the possibilities of collective responsibility. Social literacy is an evolving and a contested terrain, but it has consolidated around a series of orientations, which may have been subdued in recent decades but are not forgotten.

My list may be incomplete, but my research indicates that social literacy grows out of four fundamental commitments:

- First, a commitment to the primacy of political will over all forms of political fatalism, including market fundamentalism.[39] Markets are understood as inherently unstable and unequal; governments can and should intervene to create opportunities, cushion hardship and address systemic disadvantage.

37. Alan Wolfe, *Whose Keeper? Social Science and Moral Obligation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 237.

38. Somers, *Genealogies of Citizenship* (2008), 221; Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books), 1973.

39. Hacker, *The Great Risk Shift* (2008), 21.

- Second, a commitment to the idea of our shared fate, meaning that social risks are not the responsibility of individuals alone. Social insecurity can be reduced through collective insurance against misfortune and its consequences.[40]
- Third, a commitment to social rights, broadly defined, as a public good and a necessary correlate of democratic governance. "Political rights are necessary to set social rights in place" while social rights are indispensable to make political rights "real" and keep them in operation. "The two rights need each other for their survival."[41]
- Fourth, a commitment to social equality and social justice as an always already unfulfilled promise. The social is a field of unresolved antagonism and an open space for social change, where excluded and emerging subjectivities can make claims to equality, social justice, and social security, however these terms may come to be understood.

Blaming the Intellectual

Not since the 1930s has there been more space or more need for social scientists to provide analysis and critique. We should be engaging in social media with diverse publics about strategies for renewal. But, as I noted earlier, our disciplines have been under siege on a variety of fronts. Market-oriented governments dismiss our research as irrelevant. Shrinking arts funding and arts faculties in our universities convey a daily message to academics, students, and the broader public alike that the social disciplines are momentarily tolerated and ultimately expendable. In the right-wing media, commentators level stinging criticisms at academics and social researchers for their alleged pie-in-the-sky liberalism. Some critics, however, condemn the social disciplines for not being progressive enough. They say that we in the social sciences have let ourselves down. Frank Furedi, for example, holds intellectuals to account for failing to infuse contem-

40. Bauman, *Collateral Damage* (2011), 16.
41. Ibid., 14; Somers, *Genealogies of Citizenship* (2008), 8.

porary political debates with progressive alternatives and for abandoning visions of a better world.[42]

Chris Hedges, in his compelling book, *The Death of the Liberal Class* (2010), admonishes intellectuals for abandoning their historic role of speaking the truth to power. Hedges argues that the American liberal class was seduced by the utopian promises of globalization and market governance, and by the trappings of power, which have been systematically conferred on those who bowed to the new governing orthodoxy. Hedges explains that universities, especially law and political science departments, "parrot[ed] the discredited ideology of unregulated capitalism and have no new ideas. The arts, just as hungry… for corporate money and sponsorship, refuse[d] to address the social and economic disparities that create suffering for tens of millions."[43] Our disciplines discredited and silenced critics within our own ranks, and then succumbed to opportunism and fear, all the while betraying a growing public that is struggling to make ends meet. Although the emperor of the market has been revealed as having no clothes, Hedges argues, the liberal class has no clothes either. That is to say, we have no alternative vision and no allies in the broader community. For Hedges, the liberal class lost its moral autonomy; it has betrayed others as it betrayed itself; it is a victim of its own complicity.

But do these admonishments really capture the issues of accountability and social literacy in these uncertain times? Can we really come to grips with our uncertain world without first interrogating the profoundly anti-social instincts of the market-driven knowledge culture that has informed our politics and our daily lives for more than a generation? Not likely. Many of us use the term

42. Frank Furedi, "The year when the word 'progressive' lost its meaning," December 29, 2011, http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php/sitearticle/11931

43. Chris Hedges, *The Death of the Liberal Class* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2010), 11.

"neoliberalism" as shorthand for this market-driven knowledge culture, and the sea change in governing assumptions that took root globally in 1980s. Neoliberalism is a term that includes many different things (policies, class interests, discourses); it is also a moving target, being made and remade through a series of crises of its own creation.[44] Neoliberalism is a chameleon, lacking a core set of values, with the powerful exception of its consistent antipathy to the social and the four commitments of social literacy that I have discussed.[45] Since its inception in the 1920s, neoliberalism has been an unrelenting anti-social political doctrine that "reaches from the soul of the citizen-subject to education policy to the practices of empire."[46] Over the course of a generation, our politics and our social imaginations have been "cleansed so that the public interest, public ownership, common goods, equality, the redistribution of wealth, the stubborn facts about poverty and inequality, etc., all became unspeakable."[47]

It is paradoxical, to say the least, that a branch of the social sciences, that being neo classical economics, has sidelined its core concerns. Neo classical governing principles were roundly rejected in the aftermath of laissez-faire. In the 1940s and 50s, as Susan George once mused, "you would have been laughed off the stage or sent off to the insane asylum, if you had seriously proposed any of the ideas and policies in today's standard neo-liberal

44. James Peck, Nick Theodore, and Neil Brenner, "Post-neoliberalism and Its Malcontents," *Antipode* 41, no. 1 (2009), 94-116; here: 105; Stuart Hall, "The Neoliberal Crisis," in *Soundings on the Neoliberal Crisis,* eds. Jonathan Rutherford and Sally Davison (London: Soundings, 2012), 8-26.

45. John Clarke, "Living with/in and without neoliberalism," *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology* 51 (2008), 135-147; here: 140.

46. Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays in Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 39.

47. Stuart Hall and Doreen Massey, "Interpreting the Crisis," in *Soundings on the Neoliberal Crisis,* eds. Jonathan Rutherford and Sally Davison, 55-69; here: 59.

toolkit."[48] During the stagflation in the late 1970s, however, neoclassical economics grew roots in leading economics departments and captured the imaginations of international financial institutions and national policy networks. Armed with the certainties of complex statistical modelling and theories of utility maximization and efficient markets, it promised to liberate markets and generate prosperity. Economics forgot its long tradition in political economy and moral philosophy.[49] It became more and more intolerant of alternative perspectives in teaching, research appointments, and publications, and blocked the professional advancement of its critics.[50]

Economics established technical supremacy in the social sciences by its own standards and, once concepts such as utility maximization were established as universal, its applications were unlimited.[51] The new model colonized the social sciences. Equity, collective provision, and aspirations for social justice were deemed incompatible with economic growth and international competitiveness. The new public management and policy models asked us to accept, as an article of faith, the maxim of all other things being equal when our theories, research, and lived experience told us precisely

48. Susan George, "A Short History of Neo-liberalism: Twenty Years of Elite Economics and Emerging Opportunities for Structural Change" (1999), http://www.globalexchange.org/resources/econ101/neoliberalismhist, quoted in Henry Giroux, *The Terror of Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), xxiii.

49. Emanuel Derman, *Models Behaving Badly: Why Confusing Illusion with Reality Can Lead to Disaster on Wall Street and in Life* (New York: Free Press, 2011).

50. Ben Fine, *Social Capital versus Social Theory: Political Economy and Social Science at the Turn of the Millennium* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 11; Ira Basin, "Economics has met the enemy, and it is economics," *Globe and Mail*, October 15, 2011, F1, F6; Paecon, "A Brief History of the Post-Autistic Economics Movement," *Post-autistic Economics* (n.d.), http://www.paecon.net/HistoryPAE.htm.

51. Fine, *Social Capital versus Social Theory* (2001), 45-6.

the opposite.[52] We were asked to buy into the false premise that economic growth was a precondition for the realization of social goals of health, education, and social equality rather than the reverse.[53] In fact, acceptance of these fundamentally political tenets was the precondition for being invited into the policy-making process.

John Maynard Keynes wrote in 1935 that "practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back."[54] We have been set adrift by fatalistic scribblings, which told us that markets were self-regulating and beyond democratic comprehension or control. If left alone, we were told, markets would raise all the boats in the harbour: politics had no business in doing the business of doing business. But, if the social sciences and historical experience have taught us anything, it is that markets are, by definition, political creations, which and are made and remade through political struggles to serve the few or the many.

Blaming the Individual

We also bear the weight of neoliberal scribblings that continue to tell us that individuals must be self-sufficient market actors, who, as such, bear full responsibility for themselves, their families, and their futures. The incessant rhetoric and policies of individualization, which are intensifying in this age of austerity, place steeply rising demands on everyone to find personal causes and personal responses, what Beck terms as "biographic solutions," to what are,

52. Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 30.

53. Alex Himmelfarb, "Cutting taxes gives us an unjust society, not a free lunch," *CCPA Monitor* 18, no. 6 (2011), 1, 6-7.

54. John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 570.

in effect, the shared social challenges of our era. The list of social challenges is long: income disparities, racial inequalities, intergenerational inequalities, increasingly inaccessible education, child care, elderly care, environmental catastrophes.[55] Hacker calls this "The Great Risk Shift," whereby our governments have downloaded more and more economic risk onto the fragile balance sheets of individuals.[56] Individuals are expected to seek and find their own answers to societal problems. Individuals are expected to use their own individually managed resources to solve social problems. They are to bear the sole responsibility for their choices and the success or defeat of their actions.[57]

The problem with this formulation is not that individuals and families do not try to find solutions, or fail to comply with the individualized solutions forced upon them.[58] All of us struggle with these expectations on a daily basis. Finding employment, arranging child or elder care, or acquiring new skills are obvious examples. Rather, the problem, as Bauman explains, is that the very formulation of a "biographic solution to systemic contradictions is an oxymoron; it may be sought but it cannot be found."[59] The knowledge and resources that we bring to our life choices, however, are "not themselves matters of choice."[60] Our individual struggles are frustrated on two levels. First, typical families have fewer financial resources to

55. Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences* (London: Sage, 2002), 22-6; Janine Brodie "Rethinking the Social in Social Citizenship" (2008); Janine Brodie, "Globalization, Canadian Family Policy and the Omissions of Neoliberalism." *North Carolina Law Review* 88, no. 5 (2010), 1559-92.

56. Hacker, *The Great Risk Shift* (2008), xv.

57. Zygmunt Bauman, *Society under Siege* (London: Polity Press, 2002), 69.

58. Ibid., 68-9.

59. Ibid., 68.

60. Ibid., 69.

realize individualized solutions. Between 1980 and 2009, the market incomes of the top 20 percent of earners increased by 38 percent, remained stagnant for the middle 20 percent, and dropped by 11 percent for the bottom 20 percent.[61] Second, "our ignorance and impotence in finding individual solutions to socially produced problems result in a loss of self-esteem, the shame of inadequacy and the pains of humiliation."[62] The inescapable paradox of individualization is that it is a collective condition—almost everyone in the same boat, expected to chart our own course on treacherous waters, with rapidly shifting storm clouds, without a compass and without a life jacket.

The self-regulating market and the self-sufficient individual have lost their lustre in the face of protracted economic crisis. These icons cannot face down the staggering economic inequality, the specter of a lost generation, and the harsh austerity measures targeted directly at public services and social programs. The growing and diverse wave of counter movements sweeping the globe tells us that people no longer believe that their governments are working for them. Nothing has trickled down, except perhaps insecurity and uncertainty. The Occupy Wall Street movement, which erupted simultaneously in 900 cities last year, was dismissed in the media for failing to have a clear message or a coherent program for change. But, the message was clear enough for those willing to listen: it asserted a new collective identity—we the 99 percent—and the power of the collective. Social scientists must listen closely to what these countermovements are saying, whether mobilized behind the Occupy Wall Street movement, the Golden Dawn in Athens, or the Tea Party in Arizona. Focusing on the Tea Partiers, Chomsky argues that their obvious anger is "understandable." For over 30 years, people who thought they were doing all the right things have seen their real

61. Market incomes are from all sources before government transfers or taxes are taken into account (CCPA 2012).

62. Bauman, *Collateral Damage* (2011), 101.

incomes stagnate or decline; others have lost their homes. People want answers, but right-wing politicians and talk-show radio hosts seem to be the only ones providing them. "They have an answer to everything," he says, "a crazy answer, but it is an answer."[63] The Tea Party movement has been funded primarily by the libertarian wing of America's 1 percent. Neoliberalism has lost its coherence, but the economic and political interests that served it so well for the past three decades have "deep instincts for self-preservation."[64]

Blaming the Messenger

It has been 50 years since Thomas Kuhn wrote *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). In it, he described how scientific paradigms eventually collapse under the weight of their own failures and their incapacity to grapple with new problems. Old ways of intervening in the world become discredited, but they live on for some time as zombie-like entities, living yet dead.[65] Their adherents, afraid to let go of the familiar, resist messengers with contrary evidence: the living yet dead refuse to ask new questions or adopt different priorities. Kuhn says it often takes a new generation to make the break with stale mind sets and vested organizational hierarchies. In politics, paradigmatic challenges are resisted by those in power. The ruling class refuses to concede failure because to do so would be an admission that they have lost control.[66] And, of course, as Upton Sinclair put it, "it is difficult to get a man [sic] to understand something when his salary depends on not understanding it."[67] It is far

63. Quoted in Matthew Rothschild, "Chomsky Warns of Risk of Fascism in America," *The Progressive*, April 12, 2010, http://progressive.org/wx041210.html

64. James Peck et al., "Post-neoliberalism and Its Malcontents" (2009), 105.

65. Ibid., 95.

66. Christopher Hedges, *The World As It Is: Dispatches on the Myth of Human Progress* (New York: Nation Books, 2011), 165.

67. Quoted in Judt, *Ill Fares the Land* (2010), 168.

easier to try to change the subject or shoot the messenger: in short, to manufacture social illiteracy.

Social illiteracy appears on many fronts. William Greider's term, "rancid populism" has been revived to describe how powerful interests in the United States cultivate antipathy to the "other" and to divert public attention away from the economic crisis.[68] Benjamin DeMott also laments the proliferation of what he terms "Junk Politics." Typically, junk politics breeds contempt for experts and science, and asserts stark dichotomies in public discourses between taxpayers and freeloaders, public and private, and criminals and victims.[69] It also amplifies external threats at the expense of complex domestic problems. Junk politics feeds social illiteracy because it misidentifies our problems and turns people against each other. Junk politics erodes public trust in government, which is "the most powerful tool" that we have to shape our collective future.[70]

In Canada, we encounter social illiteracy in the staging of horizontal antagonisms, the silencing of equity-seeking groups, and the suppression of social knowledge. Like the United States, Canada has its fair share of junk politics, which juxtaposes so-called job creators against immigrants, the poor, equity seekers, public sector workers—any and all who can be represented as being dependent on the public sector. These are false and forced distinctions. We are all job creators when we fund public goods and public services, and when we redistribute income down the income ladder. We need a vibrant private sector and the employment that it can generate. But, we also need to be clear that the private sector grows on physical, political,

68. William Greider, *Who Will Tell the People: The Betrayal of American Democracy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).

69. Benjamin DeMott, *Junk Politics: The Trashing of the American Mind* (New York: Nation Books, 2003); Himmelfarb, "Cutting taxes gives us an unjust society, not a free lunch" (2011), 6.

70. Himmelfarb, "Cutting taxes gives us an unjust society, not a free lunch" (2011).

and intellectual infrastructures that were built by ordinary taxpayers, especially earlier generations, who believed that, collectively, they could shape a more humane and responsible future.[71]

The dismantling of equity-seeking and environmental groups is another vector in the active production of social illiteracy in contemporary Canada. A few years ago, I wrote about how the idea of the gender-equity agenda was systematically erased from our politics. I concluded that this erasure came in three stages—discrediting the message and the messengers, dismantling organizational infrastructures, and disappearance from public discourses.[72] We now see this strategy applied to an ever-wider spectrum of civil society groups. They have been labelled as special interests and radicals, as unrepresentative of their constituencies or of ordinary Canadians, or even as money launderers and the dupes of foreign interests. The discrediting of all manner of civil society organizations has been relentless. Organizations devoted to poverty reduction, Aboriginal health, immigrant settlement, and the environment have been defunded, their books audited, and their charitable status interrogated, and others have simply been dismantled. The systematic levelling of this social infrastructure is disconcerting in itself, but the reason cited for their exile—advocacy activities—gnaws at the very heart of a democratic polity. Independent of the very tangible services that many of these groups provide to their communities, advocacy is a necessary part of democratic pluralism and the thread that coheres and nurtures social and political rights. Shooting the messenger impoverishes us all.[73]

71. Ibid., 6.

72. Janine Brodie, "We Are All Equal Now: Contemporary Gender Politics in Canada," *Feminist Theory* 9, no. 2 (2008), 145-64.

73. Janine Brodie, "Manufactured Ignorance: Harper, the Census, and Social Inequality," *Canada Watch*, Spring 2011, 30-2, http://www.yorku.ca/robarts/projects/canada-watch/pdf/CW_Spring2011.pdf

The progressive suppression of social knowledge, however, is, I believe, the greatest challenge to scholarship in these uncertain times. Social science funding has declined, researchers have been constrained by various forms of conditionality, social policy branches in government have been shut down, research reports censored and shelved, and government scientists prevented from sharing their research with the public, the press, or other researchers. Earlier this year, the prestigious international journal *Nature* published an open letter urging the federal government to stop silencing its scientists. In the spring of 2012, hundreds of scientists, many dressed in white lab coats, marched on Parliament Hill with the same demand.

Silencing underlies the cancellation of the long-form census in 2010 and the progressive suppression of social data that has followed in the wake of this unprecedented decision. Despite the resignation of Canada's chief statistician and protests from over 300 groups, many from the business community itself, and subnational governments, the cancellation of the long-form census was just a tipping point. The government has terminated all kinds of data collection, ranging from climate measurement in the Arctic to surveys of Aboriginal Canadians and people living with disabilities. And now, under the banner of austerity, the Statistics Canada budget has been cut more deeply than other governmental departments and half of its staff has been put on notice that their jobs are at risk. This can only result in "fewer surveys, less data and less analysis."[74] In addition, funding has been eliminated from the National Council of Welfare, which was mandated by an act of Parliament to provide an annual report on poverty and welfare incomes.[75] The First Nations Statistical

74. Louise Egan, "Data Hounds Fearful of Canada Cuts Stats Budget," Reuters, May 2012, http://ca.reuters.com/article/businessNews/idCABRE84113S201205022

75. Steve Kersteller, "Scrapping Welfare Council is a cheap shot by government that does not care for the poor," *Toronto Star*, April 8, 2012.

Institute and the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy were also axed.[76] Statistics of employment in universities and the federal contractors program are also gone. We will be unable to track whether our universities and the private sector partners have opened their doors to racial minorities, Aboriginal people, the differently abled, or women.

The destruction of critical sources of social knowledge promises to save taxpayers around $40 million dollars, a substantial figure to be sure but undoubtedly less than the cost of a wing on an F-35 fighter jet. Cuts are not the same as savings. Who benefits from the suppression of social data? Who bears the costs? Social statistics are a vital part of social literacy and social knowledge production. These data help us measure our progress toward collective goals, to compare well-being among diverse groups, across time, and with other OECD countries. Social data and social analysis are yardsticks that enable citizens, civil society organizations, and governments alike to track critical indicators of social integrity, including income gaps between the rich and poor, the differently abled, Aboriginal and other Canadians, men and women, recent immigrants and native born, and visible and non-visible minorities. These data also play a critical role in breaking down barriers for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Advances toward citizenship equality have been premised on the ability of equality-seeking groups both to make their case by demonstrating, not the least through reliable census data, that they have been systemically denied full inclusion in Canadian society, and, on that basis, seek redress.

Social data also subvert political agendas, especially those that conceal the growing social inequalities shaping our political landscapes. As researchers, we have to ask the obvious question: how can

76. Trish Hennessy, "Federal Budget 2012: Death by 1,000 Cuts," April 1, 2012, http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/commentary/federal-budget-2012-death-1000-cuts

we inform Canadians about changing social needs or contribute to evidence-based policy-making with outdated and insufficient information? We cannot. As citizens we all must ask: how can we have any confidence in public policies, so crucial to the well-being of our families and our neighbours, the changing needs of our diverse communities, or the sustainability of our physical environments for all species and for future generations, which are formulated with unreliable data or no scientific evidence at all. We simply cannot. More pointedly, how are we to understand any government that prefers *not to know* how its citizens are faring in this Great Recession?

Canadians have a right to know how we are faring during this economic crisis both in comparison with earlier times and with other countries. We also have a right to know whether policy interventions are working. The census and other data collection agencies send messages, to social researchers, to other governments, to civil society and advocacy groups, and to the public. Suppressing the message and messengers, however, is ultimately a pointless politics. The problems do not disappear. The inequalities and the insecurities we face in our daily lives, intergenerational inequalities, and deteriorating environments are here for all to see. Canada's plummeting position on so many international social and environmental rankings and the increasingly critical assessments of the international community cannot be hidden either. The genie is indeed out of the bottle.

Summing Up: Personal Reflections

The Trudeau Foundation asks us to talk a bit about our personal journey—how we got into the business, in my case political science, and why we study the things that we do. Describing one's personal journey is harder than it may appear at first glance. So much of our lives are shaped by serendipity—chance encounters with others who deeply influence the way we think about things, even if we don't realize it at the time. Over the course of a career, some doors open, others doors close, and some get slammed in our faces. And, unlike

researchers in the physical sciences, who may devote their entire career to the discovery of a distant star, a gene, or a cure for HIV/AIDS, the job of social sciences and the humanities is by necessity reflexive. Our critiques and our remedies are challenged by shifting vectors of power and possibility. The objects of our analyses—the social and the political—are in constant flux.

I can say that I was always interested in politics. I was raised in a small town, not too far from here, in "Alice Munro's Ontario" of the 1950s and 1960s. We took our partisan politics seriously back then, especially since my family was usually on the wrong side of the town's political fence. Elections were the stuff of schoolyard bantering and bravado. My mother and father were deeply engaged in the community. A newspaper always started the day and the CBC news was a constant companion at dinner time. My sisters and I were infused with the idea that we had social responsibilities and that politics mattered.

Our MP was conveniently bald, which meant that a schoolgirl, armed with only a felt marker, could quickly transform him into a dashing figure with a handlebar mustache and a curly head of hair. Sometimes the Honorable Member from Middlesex South assumed a striking resemblance to one of the Three Stooges and at other times to Charlie Chaplin. Of course, I now recognize that such tampering was a violation of Canadian election law, perhaps even an instance of voter suppression, but back then I was a rouge political operative and this was part of the sport of partisan politics in small town Ontario.

But with this confession finally off my chest, I admit partisanship was not the flame that ignited or sustained my interest in politics. Instead, it was social literacy, and especially the open-ended promise of advancing social equality and social justice through politics, that propelled me into political science. My formative political years were indelibly shaped by the struggles of the American civil rights movement, the early rumblings of the feminist movement,

and Trudeau's promise of a Just Society. Of course, Trudeau's rights-based notion of social justice was criticized from the outset, for example, by Harold Cardinal whose book *Unjust Society* fleshed out the stark realities of First Nations' societies. Feminist and critical race scholars also pointed out that liberal equality rights did not disrupt entrenched social hierarchies and life chances. But, the idea of a Just Society, nonetheless, had been placed squarely at the centre of the political stage. We all were invited to strive for this goal. And, for a teenage girl in Alice Munro's Ontario, Trudeau's declarations that "Canada Must Be a Just Society" resonated deeply. So did his depiction of politics "as a series of decisions to create this society."[77]

To borrow a line from American president Barack Obama, I was all fired up and ready to go into political science. Imagine my surprise when, on my first day in Poli Sci 101, my professor explained that politics was a system with inputs, outputs, and feedback loops and, moreover, that the idea of social justice more properly fit under the umbrella of philosophy where questions of "what if" were rightly entertained. Political science studied "what is"—the hard facts of political life. With many more courses and many great teachers, to whom I owe so much, I began to understand that politics is always about the enactment of somebody's idea of "what if"—like "what if" we let the market be the sole arbiter of social life? Theory always advances some vision of society and some interests over others.[78]

The social sciences have a lot to say about this economic crisis and the profound inequalities and insecurities with which we live. I began this lecture by recounting the repudiation of core tenets of market governance by leading social scientists, many of them econo-

77. Pierre Trudeau (1968), http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_g02043/is_1_53/ai_n28826622/

78. Robert Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. R.O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 204-54.

mists, working within such influential global policy networks as the World Economic Forum, the IMF, and the OECD. Solid social research tells us that equitable societies almost always do better on all manner of social indicators ranging from education to social mobility to crime rates to health outcomes.[79] Social researchers tell us that income inequality was an underlying cause of the Great Recession and, without social investments and redistribution, economic recovery will remain elusive.[80] Other comparative analyses demonstrate that social justice and economic performance are not mutually exclusive but instead reinforce one another.[81] These findings are based on hard empirical data and sound social science. Such findings also resonate with the political priorities of the Canadian public. A national poll conducted last year, for example, reported that the vast majority (82 percent) of Canadians believe that Canada should reduce the poverty gap and that the tax system is unfair. The majority also endorsed the view that taxes are a public good, meant to improve quality of life. Canadians do not fear crime in their neighbourhoods. Neither do they think that tougher punishments combat crime. Public health care remains the most important expression of their social literacy.[82]

79. Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Equality Is Better for Everyone* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009).

80. Rajan Raghuram, *Fault Lines: How Hidden Fractures Still Threaten the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Robert Reich, *Beyond Outrage: What Has Gone Wrong with Our Economy and Our Democracy and How to Fix It* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012); Paul Krugman, *End This Depression Now* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012); "Free exchange: Body of Evidence," *The Economist*, March 17, 2012.

81. Bertelsmann Stiftung Foundation, "Strong Variations in Social Justice within the OECD" (October 27, 2011), www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xchg/bst_eng/hs.xsl/nachrichten_11093.htm

82. Environics Institute, "Income Inequality and Tax Fairness: Canadian Public Opinion and Priorities" (2012), http://www.environicsinstitute.org/PDF-TaxFairnessSummit-PresentationPublicOpinion.pdf

The humanities and social sciences have a critical role to play in building a new social literacy for these uncertain times. We cannot provide instant or ready-made solutions to complex problems that ultimately require a democratic settlement. Our job is precisely to work, not only with government, but with diverse publics, to analyze and yes criticize social hierarchies and public policies that thwart a more sustainable and equitable present and future. These contributions are vital to an open and healthy democratic society. Scholarship for an uncertain world demands a marketplace of ideas that ignites social imaginaries about the possibilities of politics broadly defined. To paraphrase literary critic Northrop Frye, the fundamental job of the [social] imagination… is to produce, out of the society we have to live in, a vision of the society we want to live in.[83]

83. Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1997), 86.