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Great Transformations: Karl Polanyi and Nikolas Rose on the shifting fortunes of social strategies of government

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Matthew Adam Wynyard (B.A.)

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to make sense of the emergence of neoliberalism at the close of the twentieth century and the subsequent appearance of Third Way strategies of government in recent decades. In so doing it deals comparatively with the work of two very different, yet nevertheless both increasingly influential theorists of social change - Karl Polanyi and Nikolas Rose. In the middle decades of the twentieth century Karl Polanyi theorized what he held to be the inevitable shift from a market society to one in which the economy was embedded in a web of social relations. Some half century later in the 1990s, Nikolas Rose theorized the 'death of the social', the process by which the social logic that underpinned Western welfare states for much of the twentieth- century is giving way to a new formula for rule. Rose terms this new way of governing advanced liberalism. This thesis argues that an approach to neoliberalism and the third way that employs both Polanyi's analytical and critical tools as well as the insights gained from Nikolas Rose's governmentality studies can help to render neoliberalism both visible and contestable in new ways. Further such an approach might serve to illuminate potential paths forward.

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Contents

1. Introduction 1

2. The birth and death of the social: changes in the methods and rationalities of governing 22

The emergence of a social imperative for government **25**

Toward advanced liberalism: the detotalization of the social imperative **30**

Beyond advanced liberalism? A third way of governing or nostalgia for things now past **44**

3. Contingency or inevitability? Karl Polanyi and Nikolas Rose on social government **52**

Karl Polanyi and Nikolas Rose on the coming of laissez faire **53**

The invention of the social or an inevitable recoil in the face of a terrible mistake **61**

The death of the social or the birth of a new double movement **74**

4. Tensions within the field of liberalism **81**

An idea unfolding: competing voices in the development of the liberal narrative **84**

Classical liberalism and the turn to the social **92**

Advanced liberalism and beyond **104**

5. Conclusion **112**

Bibliography **122**