“Mark Olssen has written an ambitious book that grapples with both theoretical subtleties and the complexities of our contemporary situation. His proposed "thin communitarianism" recognizes our social constitution while avoiding the totalitarian temptations that often haunt communitarian thought. The scope and sensitivity of this work constitute a real contribution to thinking about the politics of our time.”

—Todd May

“Olssen’s book breathes new life into the debates around liberalism and politics. His grasp of diverse philosophical traditions is stunning. This is an extremely erudite but eminently practical exercise which articulates an original but very topical ‘third position’ in political philosophy. Sociologists, political scientists and philosophers will all find themselves fascinated and challenged by Olssen’s arguments.”

—Stephen J. Ball, FBA AcSS

Karl Mannheim Professor of Sociology of Education; Editor, Journal of Education Policy, Education Foundations and Policy Studies Institute of Education, University of London

“In this wide-ranging and well-argued book, Mark Olssen, skilfully exposes the limitations of liberalism and communitarianism, and offers a richer view of the human self. He uses it to advance a philosophically sophisticated and politically realistic global ethics that is sensitive both to human solidarity and national differences. A rich book. Warmly to be welcomed.”

—Lord Bhikhu Parekh, member of the House of Lords, and Professor of Politics at the University of Westminster

Toward a Global ‘Thin’ Community re-examines aspects of the liberal-communitarian debate. While critical of both traditions, this book argues that a coherent form of communitarianism is the only plausible option for citizens today. Using the theories of Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault, Olssen shows how we can overcome traditional problems with communitarianism by using an ethic of survival that he identifies in the writings of Nietzsche and others to provide a normative framework for twenty-first century politics at both national and global levels. “Thin” communitarianism seeks to surmount traditional objections associated with Hegel and Marx, and to safeguard liberty and difference by applying a robust idea of democracy.

Mark Olssen is Professor of Political Theory and Education Policy at the University of Surrey, U.K. He is author recently of Michel Foucault: Materialism and Education (Paradigm 2006).

December 2008, 224 pp., 6” x 9”
Hardcover, 978-1-59451-446-3, $87.00
Paperback edition to be published in 2009