

THE POLITICS OF REVOLUTION:
SOME PROBLEMS IN THE STRATEGY
OF SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION

by

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ABSTRACT

Theories of the transition to socialism typically invoke, in one way or another, the notion of revolution. This dissertation is a discussion and analysis, largely conceptual in character, of the political dimensions of this notion. More exactly, it is a discussion of some principal Marxian accounts of revolution.

In Part I the theoretical foundations of this account are explored by way of a methodological introduction (invoking the construct of essential contestedness).

In Part II the contours of this account are sketched, and subjected to some (largely internal) analysis. The focus here is on Marx and the dominant figures in the political tradition to which his work gave rise, namely Lenin, Kautsky, Luxemburg and Gramsci.

In Part III this distinctively Marxian account is subjected to a critique on two lines: the first line concerns the validity of its account of class, and the second the plausibility of its model of collective action. In both cases the Marxian account is found to be inadequate. Since the very heart of this account is a notion of purposive class action, the Marxian theory of revolution is thus called into serious question.

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DECLARATION

Except where the contrary is acknowledged this study is the original work of the author.

This dissertation has not previously been submitted in any form to another university.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Theme of the Essay

When Leon Trotsky stood trial for his part in the abortive uprising of 1905, he scorned the notion that a revolution could be manufactured by a conspiracy:

A rising of the masses is not made, gentlemen the judges. It makes itself of its own accord. It is the result of social relations and conditions and not of a scheme drawn up on paper. A popular insurrection cannot be staged. It can only be foreseen. [1]

There is a great force to this argument, both as a rebuttal of conspiracy models of revolution and as a precursor of later (structural) accounts of revolutionary change. At the same time, to paraphrase A C Bradley, the calamities of revolution do not simply happen, nor are they sent; they proceed mainly from actions, and those the actions of human agents. In short, they entail politics.

This study is an essay in the politics of revolution. It is not an essay in political theory or political sociology, although it draws heavily on both. These distinctions may seem precious, and in many senses they are; but in one sense they are crucially important. For the "political" is not nearly so well defined a province as most others in human affairs. A good part of the problem here is that what is to count as "political" is itself a

political question. Of course, to put the matter in these terms is to invite an introspective enquiry into the nature of politics that threatens a spiral of infinite regress. This is not my purpose; to avoid it, let me define my terms. The "political" in human affairs is that which concerns the distribution of power, and politics is any activity which aims either at preserving or at changing that distribution. To advance this definition is to stake out a position, for the meaning of these terms is hotly contested. While acknowledging the contest, I do not propose to prosecute it here; I consider the question of contestedness in politics in some detail in chapters 1 and 2. For the moment, let me take my definitions into even more contested territory.

Politics is, for the most part, purposeful activity, and the study of politics cannot escape engagement with the purposes which underlie it, nor can it pretend to impartiality between contending positions. For there are vicious and virtuous purposes, and there are vicious and virtuous means of prosecuting these purposes. (These distinctions correspond to Michael Walzer's distinction between ius in bello and ius ad bellum. [2]) Since a good part of this study is concerned with the relationship between politics and violence, the correspondence is fitting.) In short, there are good politics and bad politics, and this essay is a partisan reflection on the politics appropriate to socialism.

In a non-socialist world, socialist politics must aim at the transformation of the existing balance of power. More specifically, they must aim at revolution, and the notion of

revolution is the construct around which this essay is organised.

A theory of revolution, I shall argue, must do two things. First, it must explicitly articulate its politico-ethical content. Second, it must encompass or contain an adequate sociology of revolution. To argue this case and apply it to a discussion of socialist politics, I divide the essay into three parts. In Part I -- consisting of chapters 1 and 2 -- I argue for the first of these two propositions. I attempt to do this by an appeal to the notion of essential contestedness in politics and social theory. The idea of essential contestedness has perhaps been worked too hard in recent years, but it retains nevertheless a certain utility. Furthermore, it has not to my knowledge been applied explicitly to the theory of revolution, so that here, at least, it has not been excessively used.

In Part II -- consisting of chapters 3, 4 and 5 -- I turn to an elaboration of the politics appropriate to socialism. More specifically, I focus here on Marxist theory as the dominant version of socialist politics. Since any discussion of Marxism must also be an exercise in selection, I restrict the discussion to Marx (in chapter 3) and four of his inheritors (Kautsky, Luxemburg, Lenin and Gramsci) in the two subsequent chapters. This particular selection of figures I defend at the outset of chapter 4. My purpose in part II is to elucidate the central principles of the Marxian account of revolution. This account, I shall argue, is essentially an account of purposive class action.

While there are of course other (mostly structuralist) interpretations of the Marxian theory, they do not, I would argue, square with the central principles of Marx's thought.

The Marxian account of politics is, in its own terms, a coherent though not unproblematic one. However, its constitution -- as a theory of purposive class action -- invites two lines of critique. The first can be developed from within the theory of class, and the second from within the theory of collective action. In Part III I attempt to develop both lines of criticism. I shall argue that the Marxian account is inadequate on both counts, and that these deficiencies, taken together, effectively vitiate it.

If these problems are surmountable, it is only by undertaking a radical reconstruction of Marxism itself. To suggest this is, of course, to invite the accusation of revisionism; but the charge is a limp one, for it presumes what is absurd, namely, that Marxism is a (unique) project that cannot benefit from being revised. The components that arguably stand most in need of revision are the theories of politics, class and justice.[?] The Marxian identification of politics with classes, classes with power and power with the state is much too crude to be of much help in modern capitalist society. Similarly, the theory of class is probably wrong in its fundamentals -- the class structure of modern capitalism, I try to suggest in chapter 6, is only atypically dichotomous -- and needs to take proper account of the Weberian challenge. The theory of justice,

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finally, is radically undeveloped in Marxism. There is a considerable debate on the precise standing of the concept of justice in Marxism; [3] what is clear from this debate, however, is that even if Marx does deploy a theory of justice -- and this is highly questionable -- it is in sore need of elaboration. This is true not only because post-capitalist society is not at all likely to be a realm "beyond justice", so to speak, but also because such a theory provides one of the more promising solutions to the problem of collective action, a problem which Marxism largely fails to solve.

Is it possible to argue for revisions of this order and remain a Marxist? I do not know. Marx leaves crucial legacies in epistemology, ontology, methodology, historiography, economics, and the theories of the state, class, ideology, revolution and justice -- all seriously flawed. Some commentators have faulted them all, and still declared their adherence to Marxism. For myself, I prefer to leave the question in abeyance. I am strongly attracted to Sartre's characterisation of Marxism as a set of ideas beyond which we cannot go, because we have not yet transcended the conditions which engendered them. At the same time we must wonder how much of the theory can be jettisoned and the theorist remain Marxist. In this instance, if the adherence to a particular conception of human nature -- that of unfettered homo faber -- is sufficient to characterise a set of claims as Marxist, then this is an essay in Marxism. But I do not stake this claim; what I have attempted to write, rather, is an essay

in the politics of socialism.

2. Summary of the Argument

Part I

In chapter 1, after some initial reflections on the theory of revolution generally, I outline the notion of essential contestedness as deployed by Gallie. I then argue that Gallie's argument is internally flawed, and that the argument of Connolly is rather more useful as a model of essential contestedness. In chapter 2 I attempt to apply this revised model to the theory of revolution; I argue here that the concept is internally complex, variously describable, and embedded in a matrix of contiguous concepts, including those of power, class and the state. I then argue that specific representative models of revolution -- principally those of Arendt, Huntington and Johnson -- are clearly imbued with moral concerns, as indeed we would expect if the term "revolution" is essentially contested. My purpose here is to lay the groundwork for a specifically value-laden Marxist account of revolution, which I develop in chapter 3.

Part II

In chapter 3 I take up key problems in Marx's account of revolution. I argue that Marx works with a particular account of history which is not vitiated by images of "permanent revolution" in his work; the theory of permanent revolution, I suggest, turns

on a specific political problem (which Marx in turn does not resolve). I then outline what I consider to be Marx's account of consciousness, and thereafter turn to the problem of politics. Marx's politics, I suggest, can be unpacked into three versions, two of which are so heavily determined by external processes as to be hardly any sort of politics at all. Here I also take up the question of politics in post-capitalist society, in the course of which discussion I argue that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" must be carefully distinguished from the "commune" model of socialism.

I then turn in the subsequent two chapters to Marx's inheritors. In chapter 4 I argue that Kautsky clearly develops crucial lines of Marx's argument but that the democratic road to socialism as he envisages it will not, in and of itself, result in the desired outcome. Luxemburg's argument, as a potential "third course" between Kautsky and Lenin, is more promising and clearly develops other lines of Marx; but the relationship between objective and subjective conditions in her argument makes her strategy at best questionable in advanced capitalist societies.

In chapter 5 I consider in turn Lenin and Gramsci. Lenin's accounts of both class consciousness and the post-revolutionary state, I argue, are hopelessly flawed; the first because it oscillates between two separate models of consciousness, and the second because it derives from Engels's conflation of the commune and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Gramsci is a rather more promising figure, I suggest; the notion of ideological

hegemony is an important development of key lines of thought in Marx, and offers some hope for socialist strategy in the advanced capitalist societies.

Part III

In chapter 6 I turn to the theory of class and its relationship to the idea of revolution, and here I argue that the Marxian account fails on several scores: specifically, the notion of class consciousness fails to capture key insights from cognitive psychology, the structure of classes in capitalist society is tendentially pluralistic rather than dichotomic, and the notion of class interest does not consider the possibility that class agents may forsake their long-term interests for their short-term interests. Finally I argue here that Marx's account of class is a teleological one, and this (insupportable) teleology is the only justification for considering class conflict to be the fundamental line of social cleavage in capitalist society. There are others -- generally cultural in character -- that are not reducible to class, either as mere epiphenomena or as functional stabilisers of the class structure. Furthermore, capitalist crisis is liable to work itself out in cultural conflict rather than in class conflict.

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In chapter 7 I turn to the problem of collective action. Here I argue that the problem is rather more complex than it emerges in the classical versions of the theory, but that nevertheless the

Marxian account fails because the free rider problem is not adequately treated. It fails because it goes through on a notion of rational self-interest and is thus cut off from solutions to the problem which do not depend on such self-interested rational behaviour. I suggest in conclusion to this chapter that it might be possible to develop the notion of collective rationality as a solution to the free rider problem, but on balance the structure of reason in human society generally militates against this solution.

In chapter 8 I take up, rather tentatively, some alternatives to the traditional account of proletarian revolution. Here I consider, briefly, the arguments of Poulantzas, Bahro and Gorz, without much hope that any of them provides an adequate alternative. What their arguments do alert us to, I argue -- and the case of Gorz is signally important here -- is that capitalist society has developed and matured in ways which, if not unforeseen, were clearly not expected by Marx. The likelihood of a transition to socialism under these conditions I consider to be small. In conclusion I consider some of the explanations that have been advanced by Marxists for the failure of the socialist project. While not implausible, these explanations do not amount to anything more than tinkering with the basic theory. My submission here -- indeed, throughout the essay -- is that the basic theory is not amenable to tinkering, but must be displaced in its entirety. What is to replace it, however, is another question altogether.

PART I

Theories of revolution refer to the most basic elements of society: the patterns in which human beings choose (or are constrained) to associate with one another. A theory of revolution is thus organically linked to theories of social structure, of social conflict, and of the ends of human association. In the following two chapters I attempt to show that a theory of revolution must be more than simply a sociology: it must explicitly articulate some politico-ethical content. I argue this case by appealing to the notion of essential contestedness in politics and social theory. Although the idea of essentially contested concepts has perhaps been overworked, it still retains a certain utility, and has not to my knowledge been explicitly applied to the theory of revolution. My purpose here is to lay the groundwork for an exposition and analysis of one particular politico-ethical account of revolution, that encompassed by Marxism. This task I undertake in Part II.

CHAPTER ONE

ESSENTIALLY CONTESTED CONCEPTS

1.1 Introduction

The researcher confronting the theory of revolution notices two things at once. The first is that a multitude of writers have written on the subject. The second is that they all disagree with one another.

There are a number of ways of making sense out of this disagreement. One way is to assume that there is to be had some "true" meaning of the word revolution, and that if one of them is right then the others must be wrong. In many ways this is an attractive approach. If one could work towards some analytical definition of the term, in which precise and measurable criteria serve to distinguish revolutions from non-revolutions, then one will have broken the theoretical logjam, laid to rest the inadequate contenders, and established the definitive meaning of the concept. I suspect that more than a few writers on the subject have set to work with this purpose in mind. Admirable as it is, however, it must fail, for at least two reasons. These concern first, the derivation of the word, and second, its very status as a theoretical construct. These reasons are of course related to one another, and I shall consider them in what follows. In 1.2.1 I discuss the first, and in 1.2.2 and

subsequent sections I deal with the second.

1.2.1 Origins of a concept

The word "revolution" comes to us from classical origins, and until the age of the bourgeois revolution it retained a classical meaning. This meaning was closely associated with classical and medieval conceptions of both society and the universe itself. Bound on a wheel of fortune, human affairs could change only within a narrowly defined set of possibilities; thus the wheel revolved. To escape from the cycle, to leap from the known into the unknown, was unthinkable. In particular, to step forward, to progress, was impossible; the golden age being past, all that remained was further decline.

The Enlightenment tradition ushers in the modern meaning of the word. The rise of rationalist principles of inquiry, coupled with the decentering of the world wrought by Copernicus and Newton and the capacity to manipulate that world through scientifically informed purposive-rational action, shattered the cyclic cast of traditional thought and promised, at least in principle, an expanding progress to human affairs. The leap into the unknown became not only thinkable but imperative; the cycle of the wheel of fortune was broken, and rationalism pointed to the tangent rather than to the circle:

The wheel of fortune no longer spins around on a fixed course. Instead a revolution of the wheel means a leap to a

new plane, and an escape from its predetermined orbit. The wheel is transformed into a giant stone which once propelled to the summit of a hill, does not slip back, but rolls forward on the new level that has been attained. Suddenly history is perceived as discontinuous, permanent human progress and improvement as possible, and human energy and human will as potentially decisive. [1]

In these terms, the French Revolution is the first of the modern revolutions, and indeed the modern meaning might be said to have emerged in full-blown form in the exchange between Louis XVI and the duke who brought him the news of the fall of the Bastille. Henceforth revolution implied a fundamental alteration in the basic patterns of society, whether for better or for worse. Thus extracted from the realm of inevitability and cast in human terms, the term became a watchword for either progress or degeneration, depending on the commitment of the user.

1.2.2 The Theoretical Status of the Concept

From the preceding discussion it is clear that at every stage of its development the term "revolution" was heavily sedimented with ideological meanings, meanings which both mirrored and strengthened prevailing conceptions about social and political change. If one is to deploy a purely analytical version of the word, then the concept must first be thoroughly dredged for ideological muck. This is no easy task, for it is quite insufficient -- as I shall argue later -- to proceed by way of definitional decree. For it is a very easy thing to bring into the world an entirely new meaning, but a very difficult thing to raise it to maturity. Furthermore, while many writers have set

out on this path, they have found themselves unable to keep to it. In full-blown form the concept must be tested in historical application, and not a few scholars have found the raw material of history altogether too interesting and too amenable to other meanings of the term to stick to their analytical definitions. And this is perhaps no bad thing; for precise analytical definitions, precisely applied, produce little of interest. One might argue, for example, that a revolution takes place only when conditions q , r and s are met (precise criteria for measurement being provided) and then find, in application of this definition, that seven revolutions have occurred in the course of history. Changes in the initial parameters would presumably produce a different set of conclusions. But while such an exercise is not uninteresting, it is not particularly interesting either. What it is not is illegitimate; a large point in its favour which does not outweigh its considerable drawbacks.

Of illegitimate approaches to the study of revolution there is another story to be told, which I turn to below. I shall argue that the allegedly "value-free" status of so many accounts of revolution is null and void, for there are political purposes -- conscious or unconscious -- encoded within them. My case is not that such value-laden models of revolution are illegitimate. According to the account of theory-building which I shall deploy, political purposes are almost as a matter of necessity built into the concept of revolution. What certainly is illegitimate is to describe what is actually a value-laden account as value-free. When this is done, an immediate critical concern is to uncover

and expose the interests which underlie it.

This is, of course, a common theme in much of Marxist commentary. From the privileged standpoint of "science", the Marxist theoretician is able to discern and reveal the (class) purposes that underpin contending explanations. These can then be slotted into whichever pigeonholes are desired, from the catch-alls of "bourgeois" and "petty bourgeois" to arguably more precise delineations (idealist, historicist, individualist, humanist, etc). The act of pigeonholing is at the same time an act of dismissal.

At one level, I see a certain sense in this approach; the category of "bourgeois social science" does describe a certain mode of theorisation. At another level, however, it is simply not prudent to begin with labels of this sort, for the process of labelling is the start of a slippery slide which culminates in a Stalinist view of the world (I use the label carefully; consider Stalin's use of such terms as "social deviationist", social opportunist", etc). Once such a world view is fully formed, there are as many labels as there are social rubrics; and the corollary of this is that the "adamantine unity of the party" which all this labelling is supposed to serve is the intolerant dictatorship of a clique.

Fortunately, it is possible to uncover and explore the moral assumptions and preconceptions that lie behind supposedly "value-

free" arguments without resorting to these sort of crude categories. Steven Lukes, for example, does precisely this in his study on power, in a way that is simultaneously intelligent, sympathetic and morally uncompromising; behind his work lies the considered judgement that the position he is defending has a value independent of its political utility, and that this value rests ultimately though not solely on rational foundations. In approaching the literature on revolution I have tried to adopt something of Lukes's method. I think that Lukes's appeal to the notion of "essentially contested concepts" is exactly correct, although I have tried to be more careful than Lukes in using Gallie's original concept. Indeed, part of my argument rests heavily on Lukes's model of power, since it is one of my contentions (following Connolly) that a theory of revolution can be evaluated only in relation to its immediate conceptual neighbours, and any account of revolution must refer to at least three related concepts: power, class (or a comparable model of collective action) and the state.

I have referred constantly to the problem of underlying political convictions within theories of revolution. I submit that not only is it effectively impossible to generate a "value-free" model of revolution (certainly not one that can command much interest), but that one is under an obligation to acknowledge and to develop this moral dimension in theorising about revolution. I shall expand this case below; for the moment, I turn to a preliminary account of the general theory of revolution,

particularly the problem of definitions.

1.3.1 The problem of definition (i)

Revolutions, as Hannah Arendt observed, are not mere changes. If the fact of social and political change were sufficient to establish the occurrence of a revolution, then we are living, and have always lived, in most revolutionary times. The problem is not changes -- or "mere" changes -- but what sort of changes are involved in revolutions. Clearly, political change comes in a variety of forms; if the term "revolution" is to have any meaning, it must be located within a spectrum of possibilities.

On this score political scientists are in general agreement. Not only is a revolution distinct from such "ordinary" processes as electoral changes in regime; it is also, more importantly, distinct from "extraordinary" processes such as coups d'etat, putsches, and palace revolutions. In short, the term "revolution" does not refer to the idea of government alone. Nor, for that matter, does it refer only to the idea of the state; what is distinctive about revolutions (although not revolutions alone) is their social dimension, either because they are the product of social forces or because of the sorts of social changes to which they lead. In this sense the Russian Revolution does not consist in the events before the Winter Palace on the night of November 7 1917; it consists rather in the transformation of Russian society between (roughly) 1905 and 1938.

At this point the consensus among political scientists is more or less intact. From here on, however, it decomposes rapidly. The roots of revolution, it is agreed, are social; but there is no agreement on the meaning to be attached to the word "society". And this is scarcely surprising; for one's view of the collective association of human beings, living together by choice or circumstance, is bound to be heavily coloured by fundamentally ethical conceptions about the "real" nature of conflict in society or about how the costs and benefits of collective association should be distributed. Since we are dealing here with some of the fundamental building blocks of society -- the ideas of collective existence, of social order and social change -- the ideological encrustations that typically cover such notions pose acute difficulties in constructing a definition of revolution.

Numerous political scientists have attempted to escape from this problem -- to rid the term of its ideological sediment -- by running down the fire escape of definitional fiat. But the fire escape leads nowhere, except to the desert of taxonomy. If one remains merely at the level of definitions, the result is a system of analytical statements which all appeal for their validity to the original empowering definition, and the taxonomic system remains closed or self-encapsulated. If by contrast one places definitions in their proper context -- as pivots or points of contact by which one climbs the rockface through the hard work of argument -- then one is quickly

returned to the real world of human affairs, in which moral issues are threaded into the skein of our relations with society and one another. Once we are back in this world, we are compelled to take a stand; and our definition of "revolution" is then, among other things, a way of staking out a certain ethical space. Under these circumstances, to search for a "value-free" definition of an historically complex and ideologically loaded term is, to say the least, difficult. I turn now to the illustration of this submission by considering some of the definitions that have been offered, both value-laden and value-free.

1.3.2 The Problem of Definition (ii)

Consider Peter Calvert's definition of revolution:

"Revolution" may be understood as referring throughout to events in which physical force (or the convincing threat of it) has actually been used successfully to overthrow a government or regime. Where such movements have not been successful, they are referred to, according to context, as "rebellions", "revolts", "insurrections" or "uprisings". Though there are semantic variations between these terms, the usage of each follows custom, and does not imply a value judgement. [2]

For some reason, Noel O'Sullivan regards this definition as "scholarly and lucid" [3], although it is difficult to see what it has to recommend it. Among the problems that it raises are: (1) what are we to make of usages such as "the 1905 Revolution"? Calvert wants us to call this a rebellion; but its significance in the overall process of the Russian Revolution places it far beyond a mere uprising; and in any case, the expression is so

much a part of the "ordinary usage" to which Calvert himself appeals that redefining this usage strains Calvert's definition. (2) How are we to distinguish, on Calvert's definition, between revolutions and coups d'etat? (3) Why should force be the only defining characteristic of revolution? For that matter, why should it be a defining characteristic at all? (4) What can Calvert possibly mean, even ignoring the concerns of 1.31 above, by the assertion "the usage of each follows custom, and does not imply a value judgement"? (5) Most importantly, is not this definition too trivial to be of any use at all? Analogously, we could define "the state" as "the big organisation that runs the country" -- which is undoubtedly exactly what the state does, but this definition is a "common sense" one (which is exactly what recommends it to Noel O'Sullivan). We cannot distinguish, on Calvert's definition, between violent political change in classical times and in contemporary Europe. Calvert is, however, at least consistent; the first two chapters of his book are devoted to ancient Greece and Egypt.

Here is a definition too flawed to be of any use; I offer it only to illustrate how problematic a simple, "common sense" definition of an exceedingly complex concept is likely to prove. At a somewhat higher level of complexity, consider Huntington's definition of revolution as

a rapid, fundamental and violent domestic change in the dominant values of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership and government activity and policies. Revolutions are thus to be distinguished from insurrections, rebellions, revolts, coups, and wars of

independence. [4]

Here is a more careful definition than Calvert's, as the distinction between merely governmental change and more fundamental change illustrates. It is also, as I shall show below, a definition that is locked into a set of definite and explicit moral commitments. Like Calvert, Huntington stresses violence; unlike Calvert, he adds two other criteria, those of timescale and degree. But, while this complexification at least gets us away from the superficiality of common sense, it raises other problems that seem to me to be insuperable. In the first place, how is the criterion of rapidity to be measured? Any cut-off point will seem arbitrary, while the refusal to supply one will undermine the definition itself. Analogously, how is one to specify exactly what sort of fundamental changes are to qualify? This particular criterion reintroduces the problem of what sorts of models of society are appropriate to a definition of revolution. Thus a Marxist model will regard changes in class relations, the form of state (as opposed to its content) and the social organisation of production as being fundamental, while treating other kinds of changes as superficial.

One can escape this problem by focussing not on outcomes but on processes. A revolution is then defined not so much by what sort of changes it leads to as by the manner in which change is effected or attempted. Thus Johnson defines revolution as follows:

Revolutions are social changes. Sometimes they succeed;

often they fail. Revolutionary change is a special kind of social change, one that involves the intrusion of violence into civil social relations. [5]

Here we have an emphasis upon social processes, particularly upon the way in which social systems adapt or fail to adapt. The core of the argument is (once again) violence, although Johnson's definition is very far from the common sense definition of Calvert, because of the complex theoretical framework in which Johnson works. It is violent change that defines revolution, rather than rapid change or fundamental change:

To make a revolution is to use violence to change the system; more exactly, it is the purposive use of a strategy of violence to effect a change in social structure. [6]

Well and good; but Johnson must in turn define "violence", and the definition he deploys (as I shall argue below) leads to absurdities. These absurdities in turn derive from the sorts of commitments which are embedded in Johnson's theoretical framework -- a framework which is purportedly value-free but which actually, like so many positivist models, inclines towards a defence of order at the expense of justice. Against such accounts, the legitimate uses of violence stand in need of defence. In fact, however, the notion of violence is entirely unnecessary to a coherent definition of revolution, and I shall argue in chapter 3 for a definition in which the idea of violence plays no part. The insistence on the criterion of violence, I shall suggest, stems from a fundamental misconception about the relationship between evolution and revolution. It is a conceptual error to regard evolution and revolution as two poles

of a dichotomy, and it is equally an error to conceive of evolution as a "non-violent" process. There are all sorts of evolutionary political processes that occur by fits and starts of violence. A typical instance is the transition from feudalism to capitalism in England: a process simultaneously evolutionary and marked by violence in all sorts of ways, of which the Civil War was merely the most dramatic.

Definitions have their value, but they are not purgatives to rid the concept of either its historical or its ideological complexity. Before we can provide an adequate account of revolutionary change in society, we need to clarify our thinking about society itself, our thinking about power relations, the distribution of scarce resources and access to the public space. Until such considerations are elaborated and properly integrated into an account of revolution, it must remain incomplete. To attempt to escape the issue through the deployment of a "value-free" account is to abort the discussion of revolution itself. In the following section I attempt to provide conceptual elaboration for this assertion.

1.4 Essential Contestedness: The Argument of Gallie

In his celebrated essay on the structure of conceptual disputes, W B Gallie argues that certain concepts give rise to disagreement not simply over the admissibility of evidence, but over the very uses to which the concept at issue may legitimately be put. Hence the proposition "this picture is painted in oils" is

subject to empirical verification, whereas the proposition "this picture is a work of art" is not. The concept of "art", while it may be shared between two disputants, will be imperfectly shared; and when concepts are imperfectly shared in this manner, they are not merely contested, but essentially contested. 3. 1

To say that a concept is the source of dispute because it is imperfectly shared is not to say that the disputants are "arguing over different things" or have "missed one another's points". To pose the problem in these terms is to imply that the dispute is simple, even though the simplicity may have gone unrecognised. It is also to suggest that an exercise in clarification, if properly carried out, will always issue in agreement between the disputing parties. Essentially contested concepts are neither simple nor subject to easy analytical manipulation of the sort that would produce ultimate agreement. Indeed, their internal complexity -- or, to use William Connolly's term, their status as "cluster concepts" -- is one of the defining features of essential contestedness. In what follows I shall consider Gallie's general treatment of these notions. I shall argue that while Gallie's insight provides us with a key tool for treating certain disputes in the social sciences, he is led astray by his own illustrative example and his criteria are therefore subject to revision. I shall argue in chapter 2 that the revised criteria can be usefully applied to the concept of revolution.

Gallie's "artificial example" is that of an imaginary sport in

which the process of evaluation is continuous rather than periodical and in which simple criteria cannot be used for judging the game because of its internal complexity; that is, players bring many different emphases and techniques to the game, and there is no general agreement as to how these emphases and techniques might be valued one against the other. The dispute between the various teams, their supporters and a wavering public is thus over who are "really" the champions ("morally" the champions, the "destined" champions, etc), and the dispute cannot be resolved by counting the score since it is only one of many criteria which are treated differently by different proponents. The notion of "championship" in this case is essentially contested. Generalising from this example, Gallie suggests that five criteria qualify a concept for essentially contested status. These are:

1. It must be appraisive in that it denotes some valued achievement;
2. The concept must be of an internally complex character (although it is appraised as a whole rather than in its parts);
3. It must be initially variously describable; that is, its complexity must allow for various plausible internal rankings;
4. The achievement must be open in character, that is, subject to modification that is not predictable in advance;
5. The disputants must recognise other competing evaluations against which their own must be defended; in short, to use an essentially contested concept is to use it both aggressively and defensively. [7]

Anticipating arguments which would seek to resolve such disputes into simpler (essentially uncontested) disagreements, Gallie adds

two justifying criteria for identifying concepts of this order.

These are:

6. The concept must be derived from an original exemplar providing a reference point for all the disputants; and
7. The dispute must allow for further development of the exemplar's achievement. [8]

It is readily apparent that conditions (6) and (7) mesh perfectly with Gallie's artificial sporting example, in which the competitors may be imagined to be striving to emulate some admired example (the precise nature and value of which are contested); and their purpose is developmental (of technique, "the game", or whatever). It is far from clear, however, that these criteria can be carried beyond the artificial example. In fact, Gallie is unable to demonstrate the applicability of condition (6) in two of his three test cases; while the case of Christianity provides an obvious exemplar, disputes about "art" and "democracy" are scarcely likely to entail even contested agreement about original examples. To pose the problem in such terms is to exclude precisely those disputes that are the most polarised. (What sort of exemplar is likely to commend itself to both a Benthamite utilitarian democrat and a proponent of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry?)

As for criterion (7), this seems to me to be simply tendentious. The burden of this part of the argument is that disputes of this sort are an enriching and civilising phenomenon, and that it ought to be possible for (say) a Trotskyite and a National Front

supporter to wrangle interminably and amicably about fundamental issues, the debate never resolving itself but nevertheless contributing to our understanding of ourselves and one another. To appeal to the notion of essential contestedness is surely not to step into a realm where all opinions are regarded as "equally valid", just as to acknowledge that a concept is essentially contested is not to forfeit one's own claims to accuracy and correctness in the dispute. (I shall return to this point in a subsequent discussion on Steven Lukes.) Lurking behind Gallie's seventh criterion we can dimly distinguish the figure of John Stuart Mill, insisting that truth has many facets, that there are many paths to this polyfaceted truth, and that conflicts of this order will advance us along this path. But when a conceptual conflict stems from the advocacy of fundamentally different interests (encoded in competing models of economic or political organisation) which are not amenable to institutional reconciliation, then there is no prospect of linguistic reconciliation either.

Furthermore, while Gallie's happy image might apply in the case of the sporting example, it does not extend automatically to the realm of social and political philosophy, where conceptual disputes are frequently exploited for much darker purposes. And in the realm of political practice, it is less happy still, for the works of Committees of Public Safety are all too often rooted in disputes of this kind. Gallie is quite willing to admit this:

But suppose the pursuit of championship in our example were to result in the impoverishment of all the players (through

the neglect of their proper business), or in the formation of savage political cleavages between different teams and their supporters -- then our reaction to it would be quite different. [9]

And, in the light of this reservation, he adds:

In general, the above defence of the continued use of any essentially contested concept is subject to very stringent conditions. [10]

But he does not say what these conditions might be; and, having undercut his seventh criterion, he immediately goes on to reaffirm it:

... the probability or plausibility, in appropriate senses of these terms, of the claim that the continuous competition for acknowledgement as between the contestant users of the concept, enables the original exemplar's achievement to be sustained and/or developed in appropriate fashion. [11]

For all the insight of Gallie's argument, therefore, his criteria for evaluation are at least in part inadequate and are therefore subject to revision. In the subsequent section I shall suggest that William Connolly, in a careful and judicious application of Gallie's original notion, offers us a rather more useful treatment of the notion of essential contestedness.

1.4.1 Essential Contestedness: The Argument of Connolly

Connolly takes Gallie's argument as a point of departure rather than as a point of arrival. Instead of attempting to integrate all of Gallie's criteria into his own argument, he simply selects those that he regards as the most useful:

When the concept involved is appraisive in that the state of affairs it describes is a valued achievement, when the practice described is internally complex in that its characterisation involves reference to several dimensions, and when the agreed and contested rules of application are relatively open, enabling parties to interpret even those shared rules differently as new and unforeseen situations arise, then the concept in question is an "essentially contested concept". [12]

In short, Connolly's use of the term embraces conditions (1) to (4) of Gallie's original scheme. The remaining three are not rejected outright; Connolly merely observes in a footnote that these four are sufficient for his purposes. For it is no part of Connolly's method to delineate a fixed and invariant set of criteria for application. Instead, we are likely to find that, when dealing with an essentially contested concept, the categories of necessary and sufficient conditions are too inflexible to be of much help. To illustrate the point, Connolly considers the concept of "politics". He argues that the term might include reference to any or all of some eight ingredients, including (but not confined to) legal authority, human interests, decision-making, number of persons affected, consensual expectation, and so on. None of these criteria is sufficient to make an issue "political", though some will be more important than others. On the other hand, any three or four of them together will certainly make an issue a candidate for the rubric. From these observations he concludes that:

We cannot specify an invariant set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the proper application of politics but ... we must treat politics as a cluster concept to which a broad range of criteria apply: any large set of these criteria grouped together in a particular act or practice is capable of qualifying the act as political. [13]

In order to make a cluster concept intelligible, we must locate it in its theoretical matrix. We must show its connections with its immediate conceptual neighbours, and how the conceptual system as a whole holds together or fails to hold together. This is not, however, a process in which some concepts are "dependent" and others "independent"; we are not likely to be able to appeal for the final validity of a concept to a contiguous concept. Rather, we are likely to find that each component in the conceptual system is itself essentially contested, resulting in a web of concepts tied to one another rather than all anchored to the same rock. To cast the matter in these terms, of course, is to launch a major attack on certain notions of what is involved in "political science". In particular, Gallie attacks Deutsch for arguing that concepts in politics can be "operationalised", that is, defined in terms of an operational test available to all scholars irrespective of political preference. On the contrary, argues Gallie, Deutsch fails, as he must fail, to produce adequate operational tests for even simple concepts such as "liberty"; and when faced with concepts such as "power" and "politics", operationalism fails abysmally. More importantly, even if the concept of "politics" could be operationalised, this does not in itself establish the operational definition as the preferred one, for it might omit key concepts that we would wish to see included. In short, as Connolly puts it,

Until we consider the point or purpose in grouping a set of elements under the rubric of "politics", we lack a basis for deciding that one proposed definition is superior to another. [14]

What
underwrites
these networks
- social
networks?

Nor are we likely to receive much help by appealing to the distinction between analytical statements and synthetic statements, for the "analytical-synthetic dichotomy breaks down when we confront cluster concepts such as politics." [15] At best, we are likely to find that any statement about a cluster concept is neither analytic nor synthetic. If any three or four criteria are adequate to establish the candidacy of an act or practice for the rubric in question, none is sufficient; furthermore, we might find instances where any one of them might be lacking, and the concept retains its applicability. At worst, adherence to the analytic-synthetic dichotomy is likely to lead us back into the taxonomic desert, where the burning sun of fixed and invariant definitions oppresses us. "At the most general level," Connolly argues,

the breakdown of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy diminishes the utility of formal methods of logical analysis in clarifying cluster concepts. For these methods force criteria into an artificial relationship with the concepts they enter into, distorting the actual relationship.... More specifically, the breakdown of this dichotomy deflates the so-called open question argument classically employed by positivists to defeat various forms of ethical naturalism and to debunk arguments to the effect that the rules governing a particular concept are highly complex or subtle. [16]

If the distinction between analytic and synthetic statements breaks down, so too does the distinction between normative and descriptive statements. Description, for Connolly, is not a process of naming, but a process of characterisation: to describe is to characterise from a standpoint of particular interests or purposes; and the concepts that we use to describe

are frequently formulated with a moral or normative purpose. Not all concepts in politics are of this order, and not all are "complete" in the sorts of judgements they imply. For example, the notion of "murder" is more or less complete (for we would have no purpose in using the term if we were not concerned to express a fairly strong judgement) whereas the notion of "killing" is less complete (we might be prepared to sanction the act under certain circumstances). Unless we grasp the fact that judgements are in an important sense built into much of the vocabulary of political science, we cannot appreciate the import of disputes over cluster concepts. If normative considerations were not encoded in the use of cluster concepts, then the basis of the dispute would disappear; each researcher would simply select the set of criteria that he or she found most useful. But it is precisely because these considerations are encoded in our vocabulary that disputes over essentially contested concepts arise in the first place. [17] "In political life," Connolly suggests,

we describe people as committing treason, instituting tyranny, and engaging in corruption, and in each case the concept invoked to describe the action or practice conveys a judgement about these acts and practices as well. To apply these concepts is to sanction the judgements they incorporate. More generally, to share a language is to share a range of judgements and commitments embodied in it. [18]

1.5 Conclusion

The dispute over "democracy", "power", "interests", "class", and other concepts in the language of politics is, in short, a

contest of a fundamental character. These and others are "cluster concepts": they are appraisive in character, they are internally complex, the range of their application is open rather than closed, and they are subject to modification over time. I submit that the concept of revolution is a concept of precisely this order. In the following chapter I shall expand on this submission, using the general criteria developed by Gallie and Connolly.

CHAPTER TWO

ESSENTIAL CONTESTEDNESS AND THE THEORY OF REVOLUTION

2.1 Introduction

In what follows I shall attempt to apply the lines of argument deployed in the previous chapter to the general theory of revolution. I shall argue first, that the concept is internally complex and not easily defined by a fixed and invariant set of criteria; second, that its three closest conceptual neighbours -- power, class and the state -- are equally contested; and third, that complex (as opposed to facile) uses of the term are characterised by evaluative and moral purposes, whether the theorists in question acknowledge them or not. I shall argue this last point by reference to four accounts of revolution, those of Hannah Arendt, Samuel Huntington, Chalmers Johnson and Noel O'Sullivan.

2.2 The Range of Criteria

I have already mentioned some of the numerous criteria that theorists of revolution have referred to in attempting to develop adequate models. At this point it is appropriate to offer a more systematic list (which is by no means complete). The range of processes or acts from which criteria are typically selected

include the following:

1. The degree of violence
2. The rapidity of change
3. The extent of change
4. The behaviour of social classes in effecting change
5. The legality or lack of it in a transfer of power
6. The alteration in the value or "myth" system of a society
7. Changes in ruling personnel
8. Changes in institutional or social structure
9. Changes in the composition of social elites
10. Changes in the expectations of the relatively or absolutely deprived
11. Changes in the form of the state
12. Changes in the social organisation of production
13. Changes in the international context in which the society in transition is embedded
14. Outcomes of attempts at social change

This is a fairly piecemeal list, but it reflects the sorts of concerns that have exercised the minds of theorists of revolution. I think it is clear simply by looking at this list that there is no general agreement on exactly which criteria are necessary and sufficient to characterise a social transformation or an attempt at one as a "revolution". Thus, if one takes as one's criteria (say) changes in the form of state, changes in the composition of the social elites, an emphasis on illegality rather than legality, the alteration of the dominant values of society, and an emphasis on rapid transition, then the Nazi seizure of power might rank as a revolution, depending on how one chose to interpret the legality of the transition. On the other hand, if one were to emphasise the agency of classes and the social organisation of production relations, then it would not.

Likewise, if one were to begin from the assumption that an

attempt at transformation by a significant social group, using violent means, falls under the rubric of revolution, then a host of social phenomena assume candidacy for the title, where another model might explicitly reject their candidacy on the grounds that they were not successful. One can continue in this vein, varying the combinations and permutations to produce differing accounts. The point I wish to make is that the selection of criteria is not accidental or arbitrary. It is not as if criteria are selected, and these then constitute the theory. Rather, the exact converse is the case: the selection of criteria is itself governed by the theory one seeks to elaborate. In particular, it is governed largely although not exclusively by the sort of moral assumptions that are encoded in the theory to begin with. Once the problem is cast in these terms, then disputes over differing accounts of revolution assume precisely the form of disputes over other essentially contested concepts. That is, it is not simply a matter of competing definitions, for if that were the case there would be no real grounds for dispute, or the dispute would not have assumed the sort of import that it has. To paraphrase William Connolly,

Until we consider the point or purpose in grouping a set of elements under the rubric of "revolution", we lack a basis for deciding that one proposed definition is superior to another.

For this is precisely what is at issue in the dispute over the theory of revolution: it is the point or purpose of the competing accounts, rather than just a difference between arbitrary selections of criteria, that so powerfully shapes the

character of the dispute. The internal complexity of the concept is thus strong evidence for assigning it essentially contested status.

2.3 The Theoretical Matrix of the Concept

Equally strong evidence can be adduced by considering the relationship between the concept and its immediate conceptual neighbours. All intelligible models of revolution involve three key conceptual reference points. In the first instance, they involve some sort of reference to the state, in that they are all concerned to define revolution in terms of the central locus of political power. Second, they involve some notion of modes of collective action, whether the collectives involved are political elites, parties, classes, or ethnic groups. Third, they all involve some notion of political power. This list of related concepts is not exhaustive, but it is sufficient for my purposes. I shall argue that each of these three concepts is itself essentially contested, although by the nature of the cases and by the nature of "essential contestedness" itself I cannot do so conclusively. If these concepts are essentially contested, it follows -- although again not conclusively -- that the concept of revolution to which they are bonded is itself essentially contested.

2.3.1 "Class" as Essentially Contested

It scarcely needs to be said that there are models of class which

explicitly deny the possibility that they are informed by moral categories. One thinks immediately here of the work of Nicos Poulantzas, [1] who rejects the intrusion of moral criteria into Marxist theory as symptomatic of ideological contamination. Simply because Poulantzas rejects these categories, however, does not mean that they are not present in his own work. For to characterise men and women as Träger, as bearers of roles, is itself to take up a moral standpoint; it is to argue that we are not strictly speaking responsible beings in any existential sense. (The notion of responsibility assumes particular importance in Steven Lukes's work on power, from which the same criticism of Poulantzas can be extracted.) In this minimal sense, Poulantzas's account of class does reflect a certain ethical perspective on the world; and similar perspectives can be discerned in other accounts of class as well. This does not in itself render the concept of class essentially contested, but it is some considerable evidence for such a characterisation.

More evidence is provided by Peter Calvert, who, in an interesting attempt to apply Gallie's original notion [2], has argued explicitly that class is an essentially contested concept. Unfortunately, Calvert treats Gallie's seven criteria completely uncritically, thus seriously weakening the strength of his case. As I have tried to suggest above, Gallie's criteria cannot sustain close examination and stand in need of revision. Despite this, however, Calvert's argument is not without insight and is worth reproducing briefly here.

Calvert argues that all models of class involve reference to at least two class positions. Human societies are either multi-class or non-class societies; there can be no one-class society, since the existence of a social class entails the existence of at least one other social class. This plurality of classes, argues Calvert, must give rise to a plurality of moral perspectives on class, and class theory is therefore inescapably appraisive in character. (In another sense, of course, it is by definition appraisive, since notions of class invariably involve some process of evaluation simply in the process of classifying people).

Similarly, class theories, taken together, exhibit exactly the sort of internal complexity to which Gallie's original notion refers; and classes are "initially variously describable", in Gallie's sense that there is nothing absurd or contradictory in accepting, prior to experimentation, the possibility of various combinations of criteria for defining class. The concept of class, fourthly, has more than most undergone modification over time, both within capitalism and within "actually existing socialism". Furthermore, the range of future possibilities remains open in both societies. Finally, the concept of class lends itself ideally to Gallie's fifth criterion, that it be used both aggressively and defensively. Throughout the modern era -- and most notably in our century -- the concept of class has been a major point of reference in political conflicts, both within and between societies.

The concept thus meets Gallie's five defining criteria. To validate its contested status in Gallie's terms, we need to refer in addition to his two justifying criteria as well. Calvert argues that the concept does not derive from one exemplar, but from three: the ancient Greek and Roman models, the "estate" models, and the "economic" model of Ricardo and Marx. Finally, Calvert suggests that the interactions among models of class provide the possibility of developing the positions of the original exemplars.

The issue is not, of course, how closely Gallie's original criteria are met -- I have already argued that they are in themselves flawed -- but how intelligibly the case is argued. I think that the internal complexity of the concept is not difficult to establish, nor is the relative openness of the concept, nor its propensity to undergo modification over time. What is most at issue here is surely the appraisiveness of the concept; that is, the extent to which moral categories are at stake in elaborating models of class. In this regard Parkin has offered an instructive argument:

This model [social closure], like any other, recommends the use of a particular sociological vocabulary and an attendant battery of concepts that contain barely disguised moral assumptions about the nature of class society. It is not strictly speaking a "theory" of class but a way of conceptualising it that differs from that proposed by other variants of bourgeois sociology or by Marxism. Most of what we conventionally call theories of class are in fact conceptual methods of this kind. They are, for the most part, take-it-or-leave-it moral classifications, not sets of propositions that stand or fall under the impact of evidence. What conceivable social facts could destroy either the Marxist conception of class as an exploitative relationship, or the liberal conception of class as an exchange

relationship? Since conceptual models are ways of presenting social reality, it follows that the preference for one presentation over another entails a personal judgement of some kind about the moral standing of class society. [3]

In short, what is at stake here is what models of social organisation and collective behaviour we choose to work with. I think that Parkin is exactly correct to cast the matter in these terms, for it is precisely this issue -- the vision of society that the theorist begins from -- that makes the concept of revolution morally contested.

2.3.2 "The State" as Essentially Contested

If moral concerns are sedimented in our understanding of social cleavage, so too are they encoded in our treatment of the central political organisation within society, namely, the state. The very fact that we seek recourse to a concept such as "the state" is in itself significant, for this is surely one of the most artificial constructs in our political vocabulary. One of the reasons that we develop this concept in the first place is to place it on our ethical agenda; if we were not concerned with what forms the locus of political power should assume, we would not need the concept, since it can be comfortably translated into a set of related ideas.

The great divide here is, surely, between Marxist and liberal models of the state. There is no difficulty in identifying the moral themes at work in liberal models of the state; they are clear to see in the most elaborated of all

liberal theories, namely, that of Hegel. [4] Hegel's method is to progress from moments of universality to moments of particularity and back again; the family is a moment of universality, civil society a moment of particularity, the state a moment of universality. The three are dialectically related, not in the crude "dialectical" sense of being merely reciprocally connected, as both Marxists and bourgeois social scientists have used the term, but in the sense of involving the mutual interpenetration of opposites and the categories of negation and negation of the negation. Conflict, for Hegel, is located in the realm of civil society; over and above this realm stands the state, the negation of particularity, which is neutral in respect of these conflicts (here appears in its most complete form the notion of the state as neutral arbiter) and which redeems the original promise of universality. Combining these ideas with the argument from the Phenomenology, the state is the embodiment of reason: "the actual is rational, the rational actual." In its quest for self-consciousness, reason progresses dialectically through a multiplicity of forms, reaching its most developed statement in the Prussian bureaucracy. The process is not smooth and incremental, but proceeds by steps and leaps, governed ultimately by the cunning of reason; for the owl of Minerva, as Hegel reminds us, spreads her wings only with the coming of the dusk.

Hegel is not at all embarrassed to have produced such a theory of the state; this, after all, is his entire purpose in working with the construct of the "state", when his principal

concern is of course the bureaucracy. While other liberal theorists have ironed out much of the unevenness of Hegel's model, and in particular have grafted onto it the crucial dimension of economics, no liberal model is so fully developed.

By contrast, Marxist models appear to deny the possibility of an ethical theory of the state. In part this is the consequence of a preoccupation among certain Marxists, namely, the jettisoning of all moral referents and constructs as being irredeemably ideological. I shall argue shortly that they do not succeed in doing this, since their very definition of the state ties it to a particular ethical model, whether this is acknowledged or not, both in the present and over time. For the moment let us take up an issue that few Marxists have appeared even to question. This is: why does Marx begin with Hegel's theory of the state? It is surely no accident that he should begin to construct a theory of the state by attacking his intellectual parent. For, if Hegel's work is merely ideological, it is better to dismiss it rather than to attack it in this form. For consider: it is meaningless to speak of "society", for "society" is an ideological construct; there is no society, only a social formation. Likewise, there is no law, merely legal relations, which in the last instance are property relations. Both "society" and "law" suggest a common purpose where there is no common purpose, only hopeless antagonism. And in the same sense, there is no state, only statal relations. If Marx was merely presuming that he could attack Hegel in Hegel's own terms, then he was committing a fatal error; to proceed in this way is

to fight on the terrain of the adversary, and thus to risk importing the ideological constructs of the enemy into one's own analysis. Marx was perspicacious enough to know when he was at risk. The point is, of course, that he still regarded Hegel as his starting point.

Why? The answer is that Marx is not rejecting the possibility that ideological concerns are built into the notion of the state. He is rejecting Hegel's notions, not an ethical model of the state. Where Hegel argues that the state is neutral in respect of the conflicts in civil society, Marx argues that it is not; instead, the state is in a radical sense a product of these conflicts and it is particularistic in relation to them, for the distinction between state and civil society is an artificial one. The construct of "the state" only has meaning in relation to these conflicts; with their resolution, the distinction between "state" and "civil society" will collapse, for the state is by definition bound up with particularistic class purposes. In the place of government we shall have administration, and the prehistory of human societies will draw to a close.

One has only to cast the matter in these terms to see that Marxists have built moral concerns in an inescapable way into their model of the state. For the state is by definition bound up with conflict in society; if the conflict disappears, the state must disappear too. Thus the state is defined negatively rather than positively, but defined in a moral sense it is.

One can reply, of course, with the hoary old argument about science and ideology. I do not wish to engage this argument here; suffice it to see that there is no consensus among Marxists on this score. On the one hand, there is a fairly crude model of the relationship between "science" and "ideology" which is ultimately informed by Engels's dialectic of nature. On the other hand there is a more complex argument concerning the relationship between theory and practice, between analysis and criticism, and between ethical issues and scientific issues, which is concerned at root to recast the dichotomy between science and ideology. The issue is not that Marx criticises capitalist society in addition to analysing it; it is that he criticises capitalist society by analysing it. The distinction between analysis and critique is artificial, and is collapsed in Marx's work; the persistent inability to square Marx's ethical concerns with his concerns as a scientist is a derivative of attempting to rescue this distinction.

Properly speaking, of course, Marx does not have a theory of the state, [5] since his reflections on the subject remain reflections rather than statements of the same order as those developed in Capital. (Consider here that Marx intended to write a book on the state as part of his "six-book plan".) Still less does Marx have a theory of power; the statement that "political power, properly speaking, is merely the organised capacity of one class for oppressing another", while it clearly squares with the general model of the state as particularity, is not yet a theory. It is to the issue of power that I now turn.

2.3.3 "Power" as Essentially Contested

In treating this last of the three concepts under review I shall refer to "radical" and "liberal" models rather than "Marxist" and "liberal" models. I shall draw here heavily on the work of Steven Lukes, although I shall attempt to do so critically, since Lukes's account of power remains (as it must by its very nature) suggestive rather than elaborated.

The debate on "power" in which Lukes intervenes develops initially in the circles of American political science, and it concerns above all what approach to the study of power is most appropriate. The point of departure for this debate is the work of Robert Dahl, whose seminal study on power in New Haven provided a role model -- both negative and positive -- for subsequent scholars. Dahl's argument is that political power consists in getting others to do what they would not otherwise do; that is, there is a counterfactual involved, but it is always readily apparent, in that the alternative course of action is clear for all to see. Dahl's method is to concentrate on actual behaviour in the form of decision-making processes over "key issues" (agreed by the participants) involving overt conflicts of interest (again agreed by the participants). As against this, Bachrach and Baratz attempted to suggest that behaviourism, and especially the focus on decision-making, cannot reveal power in all its forms since it takes over the existing bias of the system. To elucidate this bias, they borrow from Schattschneider, who suggests that

all forms of organisation have a bias in favour of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others, because organisation is the mobilisation of bias. Some issues are organised into politics while others are organised out. [6]

To reveal this bias, they develop the crucial notion of the nondecision; that is, the way in which potential issues are bracketed off the political agenda, or redefined in the process of their promotion to it. This shifts the focus to potential issues as well as key issues, and to covert as well as overt interests; but it remains at the level of subjective interests, since Bachrach and Baratz insist that objective interests are not a possible object of study for the student of power. To this argument the behaviourists replied that the methodology is hopeless: as Wolfinger argued, if one develops a theory about how people would act (a theory which concerns a counterfactual that is not immediately obvious) and then one finds that people do not thus act, then there are two possibilities: either they were unaware of their real interests, or the theory is wrong. There is no way, Wolfinger, insists, to distinguish between these possibilities. [7]

If the behaviourists are horrified at Bachrach and Baratz's argument, they are even more horrified at Lukes's; for Lukes enters the debate by arguing that Bachrach and Baratz have themselves not gone far enough. [8] The supreme exercise of power, which neither of these two schools can uncover, is to manipulate people's behaviour by shaping their very wants. In short, Lukes is speaking of interests that are objective rather

than subjective in character. This is of course a central concern in political philosophy, though it has rarely been imported into political theory; but Lukes insists that it can be and must be.

It goes without saying that there are extreme political dangers in this approach; for to speak of people's real interests when they explicitly deny them has been the start of many a slippery slide to totalitarianism. There are pitfalls here, but -- a point which his critics only rarely notice -- Lukes neatly avoids them. Lukes insists that the identification of real interests has an empirical basis, a basis which places it squarely within the realm of research. That is, there must be something about people's behaviour that reveals to the researcher what their real interests are, even when they decline to articulate them. Given the power relation "A has power over B" (by causing B to act in a manner contrary to his or her real interests), the identification of real interests is not up to A, but to B. Lukes thus escapes from what Ted Benton has neatly called "the paradox of emancipation", although it remains to be tested whether his research proposals are adequate.

Lukes offers two clues to such empirical research. These are: (1) The structure of real interests may be revealed in abnormal times, such as when the power structure is suddenly shaken; and (2) it may also be revealed in normal times, as when people respond to perceived opportunities that arise within the power structure. To this we might add two further proposals: first, we

are concerned here with ideological manipulation in one way or another. Given that this manipulation will tend to distort and mask real interests, and given that this distortion will tend to produce some sort of psychic tension within the victim of the power relationship, it is likely that the exercise of power will result in the manifestation of cognitive dissonances of various sorts. The presence of such cognitive dissonances would alert the researcher to the presence of a latent conflict of interest and to an exercise of power of the third kind. Second, power relations always operate to the systematic benefit of the exerciser at the expense of the recipient. One can thus take as a starting point the oldest question in politics (the question which Lenin asked consistently): cui bono? Lukes's two proposals, coupled with these two modifications (and others, governed only by the resourcefulness of the researcher) would provide a powerful (but by definition not conclusive) set of tools for the researcher. [9]

By placing real interests on the research agenda, Lukes has incorporated explicitly moral concerns into the theory of power. This is, of course, one reason why his work has aroused such hostility among political scientists who insist on a "value-free" model of power. But in fact Lukes's contention is that moral concerns were present in the theory from the very outset, and that all that he has done is to make explicit a (different) set of concerns. For the precursors were not in fact value-free models; they embodied definite ethical values, even where these were denied. Drawing on Gallie's argument, Lukes suggests that

"power" is one of those concepts that will always involve endless dispute about its proper application, because it is inescapably evaluative in character; in short, it is essentially contested, not least because it is always tied to the equally contested concept of interests in politics. Given that Lukes's model of power is not prima facie untenable, and given that he succeeds in linking power, interests and values in a way that is plausibly supportable through empirical research, it remains to be asked: what sort of values are at work in models of power? Lukes's own values are declared to be "radical", although I think that they are not so much radical as existentialist in character, because of the close connection that he makes between power and responsibility. What of his precursors? Dahl's model, suggests Lukes, is a liberal model; it is a celebration of formal democracy in America. The model of Bachrach and Baratz, by contrast, is a reformist model; it sees that the bias of the political system acts to the systematic advantage of some and disadvantage of others, but it presumes that the injustice of this inequality can be eliminated by successfully promoting covert issues onto the political agenda.

2.3.4 Excursus: Lukes's Critics

Lukes's insistence on the coupling of normative concerns with the theory of power has attracted a great deal of criticisms, and it would be well to consider the arguments of some of Lukes's critics here, since they illuminate many of the difficulties

entailed in utilising the notion of "essential contestedness". I shall discuss, briefly, four figures: Ted Benton, Felix Oppenheim, John Gray and Goran Therborn. Each of these figures directs, in different ways, criticism against Lukes's insistence that the concept of power is essentially contested and hence ineluctably bonded to some or other set of normative concerns.

Benton [10] argues that "scientific" discourse must be separated from discourses of tactics and strategy, of contest, legitimation and persuasion, since to conflate them is to deprive the second of powerful sources of clarification to be found in the first. In this connection, Lukes's coupling of power and interests confuses rather than clarifies the theory of power. While there is potentially considerable force to this argument, Benton undercuts his indictment of Lukes by producing an alternative model of power that is largely tautological. Benton defines power thus:

"A has the power to achieve A's objective" means "A has capabilities and resources such that if A utilises these capabilities and resources A will achieve A's objective". [11]

We are then told that capabilities includes skills, knowledge, etc (i.e. what in idiomatic terms we would call powers of various sorts) and that resources includes access to authority and coercion (i.e. forms of power). Resolving the definition into its essentials, we discover that "A has power when A has power, and also when A has power" -- a formula which is scarcely calculated to yield anything of value.

Similarly, Felix Oppenheim [12] has attempted to construct an analytically precise definition of power, in the course of which he takes issue with the "inseparability thesis", i.e. the claim that certain concepts are inextricably both descriptive and normative. The most effective way of refuting this thesis, he argues,

is not to argue in a general way that it is possible to explicate political concepts in a descriptive way, but actually to carry out such a program successfully, as I hope to have done. [13]

In attempting to execute this program, however, he fails fundamentally to engage with what Lukes is attempting to do. Thus, he argues at one point that

Lukes's definition ... fails to include instances that should be regarded as power relations. Rational persuasion is often used to make someone act in accordance with his interest, e.g. when a doctor convinces his patient to stop smoking. That is perhaps the reason why Lukes does not consider rational persuasion an instance of power, in contrast to my proposal. [14]

Why, one wants to ask, should rational persuasion be so regarded? Lukes excludes it on the grounds it cannot be used in violation of a person's or collective's interests, and this assumption in turn relates to the argument that Lukes makes about power, autonomy and responsibility. Oppenheim needs to show not only that his own account is plausible (which he does) but also that Lukes's account is implausible (which he also does, but only on the understanding that it is implausible in terms of Oppenheim's own account.) Oppenheim, moreover, fails to comprehend Lukes's intention in describing power as essentially contested. Lukes is

not thereby claiming that it is essentially contestable, in the sense that no one view of power is theoretically superior to another. Lukes is careful to argue for the theoretical superiority of his account at every level; and he certainly does not hold that invoking the notion of essential contestability thereby guillotines all discussion about such concepts. That is to say, Lukes is a moral relativist but not a cognitive relativist; a dual standpoint which poses severe difficulties for the theorist, but of which Lukes is not unaware.

Of much more substance is a careful and probing discussion of both Lukes and Connolly that has been offered by John Gray. [15] I shall not attempt to weigh the full import of Gray's discussion here; but three remarks are in order. The first concerns the complexity of Lukes's map of power. In arguing against Lukes's treatment of interests, Gray suggests that "power relations may involve a conflict of goals or of preferences without thereby turning on a conflict of interests." [16] But to argue in this way is simply to misread Lukes's account; for his notion of interests includes subjectively defined interests (which may not be in conformity with real interests at all). Such subjectively defined interests are entirely compatible with what Gray terms "goals or preferences". The second, related to this, concerns the relationship between "real" interests and exercises of control. In this connection Gray is perfectly correct to point out that to exercise control in conformity with someone's interest in autonomy is surely a form of power. This is a

possibility that Lukes does not consider, despite his attempts to open up such lines of discussion. It does not follow from this, however, that Lukes's account is thereby fatally flawed; for a good part of the problem here concerns the "map of power" that he attempts (literally) to sketch. Lukes's map goes awry because he overloads key concepts within it; but some, at least, of these difficulties can be overcome by recasting some of these. Much of the burden can be taken off Lukes's use of the term authority, for example, by distinguishing between legitimacy in Weber's sense and in Rousseau's. While both deploy a notion of legitimacy in terms of consent, Weber's sense of the term is sociological whereas Rousseau's is normative. Separating the two senses allows us to distinguish between fundamentally different meanings of the word "authority", and thus to set up a more nuanced "map" of power.

The third remark concerns the empirical status of Lukes's account. Lukes and Connolly, suggests Gray, are committed to an "extraordinarily arduous testing procedure". It remains to be shown, however, why a procedure should be deemed wrong simply because it is difficult. ("Why let things be difficult," as Lukes remarks rhetorically, "when with just a little more effort we can make them seem impossible?") Gray goes on to attack one of Lukes's research proposals on the grounds that "such social conditions [of breakdown and disorder], typically conditions where demagoguery and crowd psychology are important factors, seem peculiarly ill-suited for the purpose." [17] Three things need to be said here. First, Gray is simply silent on Lukes's other

proposal, and his conclusion about the empirical uselessness of Lukes's account is thus incomplete. Second, Lukes's proposals are open to invention and expansion, as I have attempted to argue above. Third, it is truly remarkable that in an article of such analytical precision and rigour Gray should employ such hazy notions as "crowd psychology" and "demagogy". In an analysis of highly fluid social situations with a view to uncovering the nature of power relations, the practices to which Gray gives these names would be subjected to the closest analysis. Gray's terms, by contrast, are precisely a way of closing off such analysis.

Gray's argument, of course, does not stand or fall on these issues; its validity turns rather on his assertion that

The current of writings on power and related concepts in which theses about essential contestability or conceptual relativism are deployed has the virtue of strengthening the sceptical spirit in social thought and of undermining dogmatic and absolutist claims. But, if social thought is not to be lost in a no-man's land of political controversy, its practical character needs to be denied and its direct links with moral and political life severed. We need to be able once again to assert with confidence that, however meagre its result in increased insight, social theory has no warrant for existence save in the pursuit of understanding. [18]

I cannot here evaluate this claim; to do so would take us far beyond the scope of this essay. Suffice it to say that I think it is wrong. I do not see how social theory can possibly be separated from knowledge-constituting claims about human interests. Nor do I think the results of such a separation -- examples of which are the accounts of power provided by Benton

and Oppenheim -- are either useful or interesting. Gray would no doubt respond that it is not their purpose to be either useful or interesting; and on that note this particular dialogue, narrow as it already is, would close entirely.

Consider finally Therborn's argument that

Lukes, for his part, is led by his moralistic preoccupation with responsibility to disregard impersonal forms of domination and concentrate on cases where it may safely be assumed that the power-subject could have acted in a different manner from the one he chose. In this context he actually throws in a distinction between power and fate! [19]

It is true, of course, that for Lukes an exercise of power always involves some sort of existential responsibility; but he is not so blind to forms of impersonal domination as Therborn assumes (although he does have great difficulty in transferring the terms "A" and "B" onto collectives.) What is at stake here, however, is that power is in the last instance a human relationship. If a transition to socialism is impossible in a feudal economic context, then the dominant class -- while of course exercising a specific kind of power over the peasantry -- is not responsible for preventing the full development of individuals that would be possible under socialism. They do not exercise power in this sense, whereas in capitalist society the capitalist class does, for a collective existential responsibility devolves upon its shoulders. In this sense, Lukes's distinction between power and fate (following Mills) is not so risible as Therborn assumes. Most significant, however, is what the quotation from Therborn shows about his "moralistic preoccupations". For what is it issue

here is a particular characterisation of people as radically irresponsible for their own actions. No responsibility, of course, can attach to mere Träger. In short, the conception of structural domination that Therborn compels upon us demarcates, no less than any other model, a particular ethical conception of the world and our relations with it. Therborn, of course, imagines that he has emancipated himself from mere ethics; but to climb up the tree of structuralism is not to escape from moral discourse.

I think it is reasonably clear from this discussion that the conceptual constructs most nearly related to the concept of revolution -- power, class and the state -- are all to a greater or lesser extent themselves essentially contested; although, by the very nature of the notion of an essentially contested concept, this cannot be conclusively demonstrated. [20] One of the implications of this, of course, is that we expect conceptual systems as a whole to hang together; there is an important difference between eclecticism and piecemeal selection. One would be surprised, for example, to encounter a non-Marxist model of revolution housed within a Marxist theory of classes and the state. This is not to say that one cannot learn from competing models; to characterise a construct as essentially contested is not to imprison the disparate variants of it in hermetically sealed containers. There must be points of contact between them, for otherwise there would be no contest; but equally, the disagreements must in the last instance be irresoluble, because

otherwise the contest would not be essential in character.

At the end of the discussion we are returned to the notion that what is at stake in the theory of revolution is, in the last instance, our conceptions of what moral purposes attach to collective existence and behaviour. I have tried to suggest that all models of revolution will be imbued with one or another set of moral assumptions and preconceptions.

Before turning to the construction of what I consider to be an adequate model of revolution, however, it would be well to reflect briefly upon four case studies to illuminate (rather than to prove) the argument thus far. Three of these -- the arguments of Hannah Arendt, Samuel Huntington and Chalmers Johnson -- are among the classics of the literature. The fourth, the argument of Noel O'Sullivan, is a travesty; I offer it to show how badly wrong a model can go when moral preconceptions masquerade as science.

2.4 Hannah Arendt: The Impulse to Freedom

"For Arendt", writes O'Sullivan, "a true revolution is essentially a movement which aims at the creation of a republic. Arendt's definition of revolution, it will be evident, suffers from the defect of immediately eliminating from the concept the main idea associated with it in the modern world; the idea, that is, that a revolution aims at the creation not just of new

political forms, but of a new kind of society, and even of a new kind of man." [21] In a single sentence O'Sullivan has got Arendt half right and exactly wrong. In suggesting that for Arendt a revolution is defined by the establishment of a republic, he is correct. Having got this far, however, he has not paused to consider the possibility that Arendt's use of the term "republic" is not the same as his. In fact, the sense in which she uses the word -- like so much of Arendt's deployment of the vocabulary of politics -- is singular in the extreme. For Arendt, a revolution does not refer merely to the establishment of a republican form of government. What is involved behind this idea is something much larger, namely, that a revolution is an act of creation, a moment of new beginning; in Arendt's words, a revolution involves the idea "that the course of history suddenly begins anew, that an entirely new story, a story never known or told before is about to unfold"; and the plot of this story is "unmistakably the emergence of freedom". [22] In short, a revolution entails the emergence not just of new political forms, but of a new kind of society altogether. The ethical commitment is explicit, and governs Arendt's model of revolution to the extent that a social and political transformation might satisfy the requirements of a dozen other theorists for revolution, but if it fails to pass this test then it is disqualified in Arendt's terms. O'Sullivan is therefore correct to say that Arendt's definition excludes many kinds of changes that for other theorists would be classified as revolutions. He is correct, however, for entirely the wrong reasons.

Three further things must be said of Arendt's model. In the first place, the "new beginning", the act of creation, always refers to the notion of freedom. The ethical commitment is therefore both explicit and narrow; where other theorists might appeal to moral considerations just as democracy, justice, order, or equality, Arendt pegs her model of revolution specifically on a notion of liberty. A revolution involves a leap into the realm of freedom. In the second place, Arendt makes an association between revolution and violence. This is not, of course, unusual in theories of revolution. What is different about Arendt's model is the careful attention that she gives to the relationship between politics and violence. On the one hand, Arendt sees the tension between politics and violence very clearly:

Where violence rules absolutely, as for instance in the concentration camps of totalitarian regimes, not only the laws ... but everything and everybody must fall silent. It is because of this silence that violence is a marginal phenomenon in the political realm. [23]

The tension is clear: politics on occasion must entail violence, and violence tends to drown out politics. In the last instance, however, a relationship between the two is inescapable, but the condition for this relationship is a limitation upon violence and the superordinacy of politics:

A theory of war or a theory of revolution, therefore, can only deal with the justification of violence because this justification constitutes its political limitation; if, instead, it arrives at a glorification or justification of violence as such, it is no longer political but anti-political. [24]

Third, revolution is a specifically modern phenomenon. Where

other theorists are prepared to describe premodern transformations as revolutionary, Arendt insists that revolution is specific to the phenomenon of modernity; that the term only assumes its full meaning with the two great revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century. Indeed, it is the American War of Independence that, for Arendt, provides the great exemplar of revolution. Where many other theorists would not be prepared to regard it as a revolution, Arendt insists that it is the archetypal revolution: the first of the modern transformations that aimed specifically at the constitution of freedom.

This explicitly moral treatment of the concept of revolution is unusual but refreshingly forthright. Indeed, it is typical of Arendt's work that she refuses to detach moral concerns from the vocabulary of politics. Consider, for example, her definition of power:

When we say of somebody that he is "in power" we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name. The moment the group, from which the power originated to begin with (potestas in populo, without a people or group there is no power), disappears, "his power" also vanishes. [25]

In short, Arendt's use of "power" corresponds to what is more generally termed "authority" or "legitimacy". Force, coercion, manipulation and so on are not, properly speaking, forms of power. In short, Arendt's use of two essentially contested concepts -- power and revolution -- makes the moral component of each explicit. For this she has been severely taxed. However, while we might consider her particular treatment of these

concepts to be wayward or idiosyncratic, we cannot fault her for having built her use of these constructs around moral commitments, for their moral component is inescapable. It scarcely needs to be added that it is on precisely these grounds that she has been attacked.

2.5 Samuel Huntington: The Impulse to Order

If the impulse to freedom dominates Arendt's work, it is the impulse to order that is the keynote of Huntington's. Huntington writes in a completely different vein from Arendt; where she is a student of modernity, he is a political sociologist. And although both are in the end conservatives, their moral commitments are radically divergent. [26] Nevertheless, both finally construct a model of revolution upon a foundation of ethical concerns.

Huntington's subject matter, like that of numerous "conflict theorists", is the phenomenon of modernisation rather than that of modernity. Not surprisingly, therefore, the appraisive component of his model of revolution is less readily apparent than that of Arendt. It is nevertheless present, as I shall argue in what follows.

The crucial distinction between contemporary societies, argues Huntington, is not between forms of government but between degrees of government. Industrial societies, whether communist or capitalist, all exhibit forms of centralised and highly effective

government. By contrast, those societies undergoing "modernisation" tend towards debile government, minimal social consensus, and an underdeveloped political and economic infrastructure. All these and other tendencies are sources of unstable government, and it is instability more than anything else that Huntington regards as the greatest social evil. "There is no greater necessity", he argues, quoting Walter Lippman, "for men who live in communities than that they be governed, self-governed if possible, well-governed if they are fortunate, but in any event, governed." [27] This is an ancient theme in politics: as Cromwell expressed it, "Misrule is better than no rule, and an ill Government, a bad Government, is better than none." Good government is better than bad government, since bad government is a source of social instability and dysfunction. But bad government is better than no government, for the lack of government marks the low point of order and stability, those cardinal social goals. Not freedom, not justice, not equality, not democracy, but order.

Bad government, however, does not in itself produce revolution. Certainly it produces degeneracy and instability; but it is common cause among modernisation theorists that misery, poverty and depredation do not in themselves lead to revolution. When people are ground down in suffering and oppression they are in an important sense least likely to rebel. Rather, they turn in on themselves instead of out towards the sources of their despair; life becomes a daily struggle for firewood and food for the children. As Davies has argued, these conditions are in a

sense least likely to lead to revolution. Revolutions occur, he argues, when the expectations of deprived people rise much more rapidly than they can be met, thus producing the classic walking-stick or "J-curve" graph. [28] In short, societies that are vulnerable to revolution are societies that are undergoing change and are in need of more change.

Once one embarks upon a programme of political reform, there is no going back; one must press on or risk sparking a revolution. The way of the reformer, argues Huntington, is hard, for he or she must be much more cunning than the revolutionary. What is required above all is a set of political skills and the capacity to forge political institutions that will generate consensus, contain conflict and defuse revolution. What the reformer needs, in short, is a handbook on circumventing revolution. In an important sense, Political Order in Changing Societies is precisely such a handbook. Huntington's moral commitment is clear: order is the greatest social good; revolution is the greatest social evil. Not only is the theory not intended to be "value-free"; Huntington is concerned, beyond this, to take his own politics seriously by placing tools in the hands of potential reformers.

The ethical concerns are thus clear. Revolution, far from being an act of creation or the birth of a new society, is an unnecessary process that bedevils modernising societies and that can be avoided by careful and judicious political management.

2.6 Chalmers Johnson's Functionalist Account

If the moral component of the previous two models is more or less clear, it is far from evident in the work of Chalmers Johnson. For Johnson's work corresponds more closely than the previous two studies to the "value-free" model of bourgeois sociology. Indeed, Johnson's model is built upon the work of that bourgeois sociologist par excellence, Talcott Parsons. Parsons argues against Marx that, far from being inevitably conflict-ridden, societies merely have a conflict potential (derivative of scarcity) that can be managed by social integration and consensus. Indeed, the Parsonian assumption is that in "normal" societies there will be a consensus on values and norms that will contain the potential for conflict. Of course, if one accepts this model one has the problem of explaining social dysfunction, the extreme case of which is revolution. (Marxists, of course, face the opposite problem, to explain social stability.) It is Johnson's purpose to explain revolutions in terms of structural functionalist theory.

Societies, Johnson argues, are akin to organisms, in that they exhibit homeostatic processes of stabilising themselves. This homeostasis involves the synchronisation of the values of society with its environment, just as the well-adjusted individual's values are synchronous with his or her objective conditions. The balance may be thrown out, however, if either the values change or the environment changes; and changes in either may derive from within or without. Combining these two possibilities, we get four

kinds of dissynchrony: (1) exogenous value-changes; (2) endogenous value-changes; (3) exogenous environmental changes; and (4) endogenous environmental changes. When one of these changes occurs, the social system will move into dissynchrony, and homeostatic mechanisms will automatically come into play to re-equilibrate it. If normal homeostasis fails, however, social elites with an interest in sustaining the social hierarchy will adopt one of four courses of action: either (1) a process of conservative change; (2) co-option of status protesters; (3) business as usual; or (4) intransigence. If conservative change succeeds, the social system will be re-equilibrated. The other options may lead to the forcible re-integration of the social system, leading to a "loss of authority" and a police state. Under the influence of accelerating factors, the psychological barriers of forcible control may be breached, and a revolutionary insurrection may occur, depending upon the degree of goal-culture elaboration on the part of status protesters and upon related factors. Since a key component of Johnson's definition of revolution is that it is a movement rather than an outcome, the revolution may succeed or fail; if it succeeds, the social system will be re-integrated through a new synchronisation of values and environment; if it fails; one of options (1) to (4) may again be exercised, placing revolution once again on the agenda of possibilities.

What are we to make of this model? At one level, it is a reasonable description of the manner in which profound social

changes occur. But a description is not, of course, an explanation; and structural functionalism has suffered above all from being a descriptive rather than an explanatory theory. More importantly, what is at stake here is the moral presuppositions at work in the model. For this, more than most others, presents itself as a "value-free" conception of revolution. There is always the possibility, of course, that the theory is too trivial to count as a model of revolution. I do not, however, think that this is the case. It is more likely that the ethical concerns of functionalist models of revolution will appear in the parent theory rather than in the specific derivative. One could therefore dissect the Parsonian basis of Johnson's argument to show how moral elements are encoded within it. There is, however, a simple way to uncover Johnson's moral standpoint, which is this. It will be recalled that a key component in Johnson's definition of revolution is the notion of violence. In this Johnson is far from alone. When we begin to ask what Johnson means by "violence", however, interesting things begin to happen. Johnson's answer is that

Violence is either behaviour that is impossible for others to orient themselves to or behaviour that is deliberately intended to prevent orientation and the development of stable expectations with regard to it. Violence is not necessarily brutality, or insensitivity, or the antithesis of empathy violence is "antisocial action", and in a political context violence, like revolution, is a contingent concept dependent on the prior existence of a system of social action within which it takes place. [29]

Many will begin to feel uneasy at this definition; to cast "violence" and "anti-social behaviour" into these sorts of terms seems to do radical damage to our moral vocabulary. However,

Johnson must be allowed to define his terms as he wishes, although this is one instance where one wishes for more sociological jargon rather than the crowbarring of plain words into unfamiliar contexts. Let us see where this definition takes us by considering two examples: (1) A pacifist Christian objects to rendering military service within a highly militarised state. His action grates sharply against the value-consensus of the social system, and arouses feelings of disorientation and upsets normal expectations. The objector has, in Johnson's terms, committed an act of violence. At this point one begins to feel very uneasy indeed about the intelligibility of Johnson's definition. (2) A black child boards a bus in a predominantly white racist suburb, and produces similar disorientation among the white passengers. They respond by tarring and feathering the child. In Johnson's terms, the behaviour of the child is violent, and the behaviour of the passengers is non-violent. At this point Johnson's definition collapses into absurdity.

What is at stake, in Johnson's model, in the relationship between revolution and violence? One of his answers is illuminating:

Despite all evidence to the contrary, some scholars of revolution persist in refusing to accept the idea that an irreducible element of any revolution is the resort to, or acceptance of, violence. Even many revolutionaries take pains to develop strategies of revolution that they can characterise as "nonviolent". As we shall see, "nonviolent revolution" is actually the name of a revolutionary strategy containing an built-in propaganda appeal to persons holding certain definable values. [30]

Why, one wants to ask, has Johnson used the term "violence" in

such a tendentious fashion when any number of other terms were available (or could have been coined; like so much sociologese, Johnson's work is marked by a positive efflorescence of terminology)? The answer lies in the politico-ethical commitments that underlie his work; for what emerges here above all is an emphasis upon social stability. Although stability is not explicitly cast as a desirable social good, there is a continuous and pervading emphasis upon it (at the expense, as my two examples show, of concerns like justice and freedom). The corollary of this is that behaviour that tends to destabilise, irrespective of the moral purposes that underlie it, is subtly criminalised and delegitimised, by being labelled "violent" or "anti-social".

Behind all this lurks the notion of the "normal" society as being one in which potential conflict is successfully managed through the generation of consensus. The "abnormal" society is one in which consensus breaks down. But when we explore these notions further, they turn out in fact to be analytical statements: normal societies are normal, and abnormal societies are not. Concepts like freedom, justice, democracy, and equality are jettisoned at the expense of social stability; not social stability in any "value-free" sense, but stability at all cost. The moral position is partially masked, but it emerges, I think, when the model is squeezed.

Whatever criticisms one might level at Johnson's model, it is clearly a plausible account of revolution, in the sense that it

coheres and resolves. To illuminate some of the key concerns of this chapter, I wish to consider in conclusion a model that does not, and which simply falls to pieces under pressure. I suggest that this particular rendering of the problem of revolution fails because the moral concerns that are built into it are not only uncritically presented but are mistaken for scientific propositions.

2.7 Noel O'Sullivan: Conservatism and Social Theory

The argument in question is that of Noel O'Sullivan, who advertises his model as an alternative to both Marxism and modernisation theory. In opposition to these two dominant schools of thought, O'Sullivan undertakes to show that all revolutions share membership in one single overarching revolution, and that this revolution concerns what he calls a shift from "states" to "movements". The "new direction" in which he proposes to lead the theorisation of revolution will, it is alleged, correct the deficiencies in the existing literature. This literature he divides into four categories: (1) the category of "grandiose ideological dreams" which he declares must simply be "set to one side" on the grounds that

any conception of revolution derived from that quarter would be too closely tied to the ideological womb from which it had issued to have any independent analytical value. [31]

This is a breathtaking position, for by this means he dismisses not only the entire corpus of Marxist theory, but all models

which are bound up with "ideological constructions", among which he includes Hannah Arendt's. (If my analysis above is correct, then any reasonably elaborated model of revolution, by virtue of the contested character of the concept, must in fact be locked into a set of "ideological constructions"; but perhaps O'Sullivan can only see the more explicit ethical components in theories of revolution. Certainly he does not see his own "grandiose ideological dreams".) Having "put to one side" half the literature, he then argues that historical studies are valueless, on the grounds that the historian is mired in a swamp of facts and is thus incapable of any scientific precision; that modernisation theory is equally hopeless, because it cannot be generalised and is vulnerable to counter-examples; and that we must finally be disappointed by political theory as well, since it has failed to rescue the concept from the "ideological morass" in which it is buried.

Is the literature on revolution entirely irredeemable? No; for we are told that in all this darkness there is one small beacon of light, and that is the work of Peter Calvert, whose definition of revolution (see above) rescues the concept by relying on the everyday usage of the word. In short, the only thing of value that two centuries of literature on revolution have produced is a definition that is radically at odds with the consensus among political scientists, and which lumps under the same rubric the transformation of Russian society between 1900 and 1935 and the murder of Julius Caesar.

Having laid to rest everyone except Peter Calvert, O'Sullivan takes it upon himself to rescue the concept from this graveyard. What we need to do, he argues, is forget about this or that revolution, and begin thinking about all transformations as part of one overall revolution. This is the "true revolution of the modern period", and it consists in a shift from "states" to "movements". The great achievement of the Renaissance was to establish a form of state which revolved around law, a concern with national rather than international problems, the distinction between the public and the private, the limitation of political power, and a tolerance for autocracy. Lamentably, these traditions began to collapse with the Enlightenment, resulting in the substitution of political purposes for law, of internationalism for nationalism, of the conflation of the public and the private for their distinction, of a concern for claims to political power for claims to its limitation, and of the sole legitimacy of democracy for forms which were previously tolerated, such as monarchy, despotism and autocracy. It is the ascendancy of democracy which O'Sullivan finds particularly irksome: the results of the democratic tradition which emerged with the French Revolution he describes as "disastrous" on the grounds that it legitimated (and legitimates) the abuse of power, where previous systems of government succeeded in limiting political power. In short, the entire phenomenon of modernity is corrupt beyond redemption, and human societies can be rescued only by repealing the consequences of the Enlightenment and returning to a "limited" style of politics.

As against the benefits of this "limited" style, the woes of the age of reason have been wrought by what O'Sullivan calls the "activist" style of politics. At this point a scapegoat clearly becomes necessary, and O'Sullivan settles, of all people, on Rousseau. It is Rousseau who is to blame for giving people the idea that they should be involved in politics; it is Rousseau who first launches an attack on the distinction between the public and the private; it is Rousseau who provides the first justification for the rise of totalitarianism.

The first two characterisations are correct (although it remains to be shown why Rousseau should be guilty of anything in developing these propositions). The last is part of a long tradition within political theory which casts Rousseau as a "totalitarian democrat". I do not propose to make a defence of Rousseau here; the task has been ably done elsewhere. Suffice it to say that Rousseau is one of those writers whose flair for a turn of phrase makes him particularly vulnerable to selective quotation. The "totalitarian democrat" interpreters of Rousseau all rely on this method of citation to develop their arguments; they approach an argument that is incomplete by holding a veil over those parts of Rousseau's work which suggest a model of radical participatory democracy.

What are we to make of O'Sullivan's attempt to rework revolutionary theory? At one level, it would be hilarious were it not so arrogantly advertised. At another level, however, I think

that there is something to learn from this travesty. It is this: all models of revolution, by virtue of the contested status of the concept, are locked into some set of political and moral values. But an ethical commitment is not enough for the elaboration of a theory of revolution. One also requires an adequate understanding of social processes, a grasp of history, an appreciation of political theory, a model of political sociology; in short, a grounding in political reality. A commitment to a set of values cannot in itself produce a plausible model of revolution. It is for this reason that, if revolutionary theorists cannot escape from the realm of moral discourse, so too can revolutionaries not escape from the realm of political theory.

O'Sullivan, of course, has confused his moral position -- a traditional conservatism -- with a scientific grasp of political reality. In this there is a delicious irony, for the alleged point of his model is to rescue the concept of revolution from ideological intrusions. Having begun so bravely, he ends by offering us an ideological dream that died with the storming of the Bastille.

2.8 Conclusion

I have not attempted to "prove" that the concept of revolution is essentially contested; if the notion of essential contestedness is to have any value, then a final and incontrovertible proof is by definition impossible. What I have tried to show is that the

concept meets Gallie's more important criteria, and in particular conforms to William Connolly's argument about the status of "cluster concepts". While it would in principle be possible to show that this is the case for each plausible model of revolution, such an exercise would be essentially pointless; if the case is to be established, it must be established theoretically or not at all. The limited case studies that I offer are intended only to illuminate my central argument and not to "prove" it.

I have argued throughout that no model of revolution -- indeed, no cluster concept -- can escape some moral component in its elaboration. My purpose in this is to establish the legitimacy of contests about the nature of revolution, and to argue against the possibility of a "true" model. In attempting this exercise, I have in mind both Marxist and non-Marxist approaches to the theory of revolution, both of which (but more typically the Marxists) are frequently insensitive to the linguistic, analytical and historical complexities of the concept. Having done this, I shall turn in subsequent chapters to the exposition and analysis of the principal Marxist accounts of the theory of revolution.

PART II

In the previous two chapters I argued that a model of revolution must be more than just a sociological account: it must contain some explicit reference to political and ethical concerns. In the next part I turn to the theory of revolution with which this essay is primarily concerned, that provided by Marxism. My purpose in these three chapters is essentially to explicate the political dimension of the Marxian theory of revolution. I do this by considering Marx (in chapter 3) and four of his inheritors, Kautsky and Luxemburg (in chapter 4) and Lenin and Gramsci (in chapter 5). In these chapters I attempt to elaborate what I regard as the central themes in the Marxist account of revolution. My purpose here is twofold: on the one hand, I try to elucidate the unresolved internal problems in this account. On the other hand, I attempt to lay the basis here for an investigation of the sociological problems associated with it. I shall argue here that the Marxist theory of revolution is predicated upon a notion of purposive class action. The resulting account faces, by its very constitution, major challenges from the theory of class and from the theory of collective action. In this part I attempt only to flesh out the account; in part III I turn directly to the two challenges named here.

CHAPTER THREE

BUILDING THE MARXIST THEORY (i): MARX AND THE CLASSICAL ACCOUNT

3.1 Introduction

I have argued so far that any model of revolution, by virtue of the contested status of the concept, is indissolubly bonded to a set of moral categories. This implies, among other things, that if the moral component of revolutionary theory is to be taken seriously -- as it must be -- then the theorist of revolution cannot escape from some sort of prescriptive reasoning. This is true whether one regards revolutions as socially evil or socially necessary. Of course, it scarcely needs to be added that the prescriptive component of many models of revolution is radically underdeveloped, because the originator has failed to grasp the ineluctably appraisive dimension of revolutionary theory (or because the moral bias of the theorist is towards the status quo, and assuming a positivist or "value-free" position is one of the ways of defending the existing order). But this does not mean that these models have avoided politico-ethical discourse, only that they are either unelaborated, dishonest, or simply crass. There is an important sense, therefore, in which the work of (say) Samuel Huntington has a theoretical superiority over that of (say) Chalmers Johnson, for Huntington is concerned to give a practical edge to his work in the form of a set of strategies for

avoiding revolutions.

The matter can be expressed somewhat differently. If the concept is ineradicably appraisive, then it cannot be contained within the boundaries of sociology. It must inevitably spill over these barriers, into the fields of political philosophy and moral theory. That is, we are never dealing simply with the sociology of revolutions (or "social revolutions", a term which conveys the sociological concerns of many theorists of revolution.) What is at stake here is nothing less than the politics of revolution.

I have already indicated in that I shall argue for a particular value-laden conception of revolution that is concerned at root with the political dimension of revolutionary change. More specifically, I shall argue from within the general terms of a Marxist model of social organisation, and more particularly, a Marxist class-analytical model of political transformation. No claim to Marxist credentials, however, can escape from the controversies that have characterised Marxism, particularly in the last twenty years. One must delineate what sort of Marxism one is working with. In this context, in particular, one must make clear what sort of connection is envisaged between ethical or ideological considerations and the claims to scientific status that are an integral component of Marxist theory. This is not an easy task, for to stake out a position here is to invite attack from numerous quarters. The general tenor of my position, I think, is clear, namely that one cannot escape from the realm of

moral discourse, and that any claim to scientificity that seeks to do so is at best partial in character. It is not necessary to state that this position is radically at odds with various "scientific" models of Marxism, most particularly that of Louis Althusser and his intellectual offspring. I do not intend to detour here into a lengthy defence of my position; I suspect that this particular controversy bears many of the hallmarks of essential contestedness, albeit within a narrow theoretical ambit. Suffice it to say that Althusser is not the only one who has attempted to separate out the moral standing of Marxist theory from its scientific claims.

Peter Singer, for example, has argued that we must distinguish between Marx the political philosopher and Marx the scientist. The scientific claims, he suggests, have been vitiated by history and are best abandoned, since Marx's various "predictions" have not been realised. [1] Instead, we should regard Marx as a moral philosopher rather than a scientist.

Singer wants us to throw out the science and retain the ethics, whereas Althusser wants us to throw out the ethics and retain the science. What separates Althusser from similar interpreters, of course, is that he proposes not to purge social relations of their ideological content, for he argues that this cannot be done; ideology is defined by one's lived relations with the world, and we cannot therefore escape from it, although Marxist science can and must. Althusser's method is to produce a "symptomatic reading" of Marx's text; a method that, as Miliband

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has observed, is clearly not illegitimate, although we will of course want to enquire how intelligent the reading is. [2] It is not impermissible to reject this or that argument of Marx's (unless we begin with the assumption that Marx's work has the status of holy text). What is impermissible, however, is to claim to find in Marx's work what is simply not there. As Geras argues,

Apart from its theoretical absurdity, the claim, for example, that Marx rejected all concepts of human nature is textually insupportable. The same with Althusser's argument that even a communist society will have its ideological, imaginary representation of the real. Rightly or wrongly, in maturity as in youth, Marx reckoned here on a society transparent to its members. Althusser, of course, was not obliged to agree with him about this or anything else. But to pretend to have read in Marx the opposite of what is there is a form of obscurantism. [3]

Whether one is dealing with Singer, Althusser or Dahrendorf, it seems to me that this sort of approach -- to purge Marx's work of components that he clearly regarded as crucial -- is to draw the teeth of Marx's project. For the issue here is surely not either science or ethics, but the complex relations between the two. Capital, it must be remembered, was given a subtitle: A Critique of Political Economy. The reality of the political economists is not nonsense, but ideology: it is reality, but reality standing on its head. Marx's attempt to invert their reality is an attempt to reconstruct reality from the standpoint of the working class. The relationship between "facts" and "values" is therefore more complex than it appears to be, for the knowledge claims which Marx presses upon us are constituted by particular (emancipatory) human interests. The construction of knowledge is therefore governed by Thesis XI on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only

interpreted the world in various ways; the point is, to change it." We cannot, therefore, separate "science" from "revolution", or "analysis" from "critique". And yet the separation is constantly foisted upon us, even at its most radically inappropriate. Consider, for example, Cohan's suggestion that "we must dig through various works that Marx wrote casting aside Marx the propagandist and Marx the ideologue in order to determine why and how Marx thought revolution occurred". [4] It is a method that is doubly valueless; not only is it impossible to approach any model of revolution in this way, it is also impossible to approach any component of Marx's work with this artificial separation in mind.

I have sketched rather than argued the case for regarding "science" and "revolution", "analysis" and "critique" as ineluctably bound up with one another in Marx's work. I do not intend to argue this case here; to do so would involve a lengthy excursion into the field of Marx's methodology, and in any case the argument has been admirably made by others. [5] I shall proceed on the following basis: I assume that everything in Marx's work reflects the reciprocal relationship between facts and values that is crucial to his method and that is ultimately defensible in terms of particular conceptions of the relationship between knowledge and human interests. I shall not argue this case here. More immediately, however, I suggest that this general proposition is true for all models of revolution -- a case that I have argued -- and we may therefore proceed to engage Marx's

theory of revolution in precisely these terms.

3.2 Desiderata for a Marxist Theory of Revolution

A revolution occurs when two distinct but related processes take place. These are: first, a transfer of political power from one class to another, and second, a reconstruction of social production relations, that is, the manner in which surplus is produced and appropriated. These two dimensions correspond to what Marx calls "political" and "social" revolutions; taken together, they make up what Draper has usefully called a societal revolution, that is, a transition from one mode of production to another in tandem with a recasting of its attendant political and legal relations. [6] I shall now proceed to argue for the validity of this definition and to consider it within the cluster concept of revolution as a whole.

The definition is, broadly, Marxist in character, but it differs sharply from many Marxist models. The two conditions I list here are the definitive criteria for any Marxist model of revolution, but there is room for their elaboration. The emphasis upon a class-analytical model of political change, and in particular the notion of historically successive ascendant classes, [7] is common to all Marxist definitions. So too is the general category of a mode of production, and in particular the notion of a transition from one mode of production to another. These are the absolutely basic notions of any Marxist model. I suggest, however, that not only are these necessary conditions,

but they are also in themselves sufficient conditions. If this position is correct then it has important consequences.

In the first place, the definition I offer says nothing at all about violence. In this it differs from many Marxist treatments, which often place a crucial analytical emphasis upon the notion of a violent transfer of power. Alternatively, the category of violence may be encoded in them in an apocalyptic rather than an analytical fashion. Consider, for example, Mao Zedong's celebrated definition:

A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another. [8]

Mao captures here one of the cardinal elements of a Marxist theory of revolution, namely, a transfer of political power from one class to another. The dichotomy he presents between purposeful violence and frivolous nonviolence, however, is false; for politics, whether of a violent or a nonviolent sort, is always hard work. Indeed, there is an important sense in which the politics of nonviolence is much more strenuous than the politics of violence. The panacea of violence, as a sort of urgent laying-on-of-hands, is too frequently an easy option. More importantly, it is always a dangerous option; for violence, as Hannah Arendt observes, can never simply be regarded as another weapon in the arsenal of politics. Violence is not simply a tool to be wielded at will and then returned to the workshop when its uses are over, for there is an important sense in which it is not

only incompatible with politics but represents in itself the death of politics. One is always adverted to the complexity of the relationship between means and ends in politics, not only in the sense that means are ends in the making, but also in the sense that one must distinguish between proximate ends and final justifying ends.

It is worth noting, furthermore, that much of what passes for Marxist orthodoxy glosses over a subtle but important distinction between violence and force. The term "violence", associated as it is with the notion of violation, typically carries a connotation of coercion extended beyond the boundaries of what is legitimate, a connotation which does not attach to the term "force". It is surely significant that Marx prefers the latter expression in his few pronouncements on revolutionary coercion ("material force must be opposed by material force"; "it is force that must be the lever of our revolutions"; etc). Of course, the boundary between the two is not easily drawn, and will tend to be coloured by class-orientated perspectives; what appears to the bourgeoisie as legitimate force might be experienced by the proletariat as illegitimate violence. Nevertheless, the distinction retains a certain utility, particularly in view of Marx's preference for "force" over "violence".

There is something more to be said here. It is this: if one seeks recourse to violence as a means towards building a society that is free of violence, one has entered into a potential

contradiction. It is not in itself fatal, but the way in which it works itself out politically will be the more unpredictable the more violence one employs.

One must then ask, what sort of levels of violence are necessary to engineer violent transformations. And the answer must be: in the modern world, very high. Hannah Arendt's observations on the relationship between war and modern revolution point us towards this answer; for the possibility of revolution by violent means is in inverse proportion to the level of development of the means of violence. In 1789 it was possible to topple the state with pitchforks; in 1917 it could be done with rifles; in 1948 it required, perhaps, tanks. In 1990? Nuclear weapons? Of course, the level of development of the means of violence favours both contestants; but, in general, it favours organised state power, with its access to technology (the hallmark, after all, of the new means of violence) much more. Engels -- who always took a keen interest in military affairs -- seems to have been the first Marxist to appreciate this; he was conscious that weaponry, especially new weaponry, favoured governments more than those seeking to depose them. Street fighting and barricades, he wrote to Lafargue on November 2 1892, were things of the past; socialists were bound to emerge the losers from any conflict with the armed forces. [9] Engels could see no way out of this problem. Or rather, he could see one way out but found it unappealing, and that was the incremental, nonviolent (but not necessarily legalistic) transformation of capitalist society. Grasping the nettle, he concluded that

If one thing is certain, it is that our Party and the working class can only come to power under the form of a democratic republic. This is even the specific form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. [10]

One should not, however, make too much of this quotation, especially since Engels is writing here long after Marx's death: we simply do not know what Marx would have argued in the same context. For the most part, Marx and Engels shied away from notions of peaceful transitions, and the entire tenor of their work is towards forceful and even apocalyptic transformations of capitalist society. Nevertheless, Marx does allow for the possibility of peaceful transitions to socialism; in his famous qualifier to the need for forcible revolution, he suggests that in societies such as England and Holland the nonviolent construction of socialism is entirely possible, although he immediately adds that these are exceptions to a general rule. These issues I take up further in 3.6.

This position is consistent with the one I outline here. The definition of revolution that I offer depends neither on violence nor on nonviolence; it is simply silent on this question. What one needs, rather than an ordained judgement on the relationship between revolution and violence, is a careful consideration of on the one hand, the uneasy relationship between the two, and on the other, the extent to which the obstacles to socialism must be violently displaced. To attempt to answer these questions in advance is not only meaningless, but vitiates the entire notion of revolution as an act of emancipation.

In the second place, the definition I offer is silent on the question of "fundamental" change. The problematic notion of a fundamental transformation as the defining characteristic of a revolution is one that has bedevilled many attempts to develop a theory of revolution. Huntington, it will be recalled, defined revolution as "rapid, fundamental and violent change" in social and political structure; and the general drift of this definition is one that is common to many others models. One runs into problems, however, as soon as one sets about trying to measure these variables. How fundamental is fundamental? There are two possibilities here: either one draws an arbitrary line, defining everything above it as revolution and everything below as not (in which case the arbitrary line is exactly that, arbitrary); or one refuses to draw a line, and allows for "more complete" or "less complete" revolutions. Huntington opts for the second solution, arguing that "the more complete these changes, the more total is the revolution". But this solution would appear to deny the concept any meaningful locus within the spectrum of political change; for one must confront the possibility of identifying revolutions that are so incomplete and marginal as to be hardly any sort of revolution at all.

By contrast, the criteria of "fundamental" change that I offer are precise and quantifiable, though not uncontested. What we are concerned with is first, the exercise of political power by classes, and second, the manner in which the surplus product is produced and appropriated. In regard to the first criterion, I

hasten to add that I am not insensitive to controversies surrounding the relationship between state power and class power. There is clearly a problem here that stands in need of resolution, and the absence of an adequate Marxist theory of power is an important obstacle in the way of such a resolution. In defence of my definition, however, let it be said that it does not refer only or simply to the category of state power, but to the power that classes exercise in society as a whole (including, but not confined to, Gramsci's notion of "hegemony"). If Lukes is correct, there is an empirical basis to the identification of this power; an empirical basis that is not inconsistent with but, rather, is complementary to an appraisive and value-laden model of power. Of course, Marx's own account of power, as I shall suggest, is seriously incomplete, and in the light of this incompleteness socialists need to rethink the problems of power and the state in socialist society; this issue I take up again in chapter 8.

In regard to the second criterion, the problem seems amenable to a solution in terms of the sociology of production and the economics of surplus theory. To be sure, these two are no less beset with problems than the theory of the state; but the problems are of an entirely different order to the hazy notion of "fundamental" change.

Third, my definition is silent on the question of timescales. The traditional definition of revolution as "rapid" change faces exactly the same problems as those surrounding the notion of

"fundamental" change: how rapid is rapid? I have already referred to this question; like the problem of defining "fundamental" change, it allows of only two solutions, neither of which is tenable. If we are to have a sensible definition of revolution, we must jettison the criterion of timescales entirely.

There is, of course, an obvious reply to this proposal, and that is that if one casts out the category of "rapid change" then one is left with no means at all of distinguishing between "revolution" and "evolution"; that the notions of "violent, rapid and fundamental change", problematic as they are, at least allow us to retain this distinction. To this I reply that not only is the distinction unnecessary, it is false. "Revolution" and "evolution" are not categories that operate on two different conceptual planes; rather, both operate on precisely the same plane. (For an attempt at mathematical modelling of this argument see the Appendix.) What is at issue here is whether one chooses to define revolution in terms of processes or outcomes. What criteria do we have for choosing between these two possibilities? I think that the answer lies in the ineradicably appraisive component of the theory: what we are dealing with, in the last instance, is what sort of models of society and collective behaviour are appropriate; that is, with the ends of human association. This in itself provides us with our answer: we are dealing here with ends, not with means, although the relationship between the two is not a simple one. It is consistent with my definition of revolution, and with the general preoccupation with

ends that is at issue here, to define revolution merely as a set of outcomes rather than a set of processes. This is not to equate "ends" with "outcomes" and "means" with "processes"; clearly, certain ends might have processes as their relevant referents. But while ends and outcomes are not simply equatable, they are clearly associated with one another. It is for this reason that I see no necessity in advance to pronounce upon the problem of timescales, upon the question of rapidity, or upon what means are most appropriate, although these questions will obviously play a crucial role in any substantive treatment of the problem, the more so as we gradually render this sparse account more complex.

3.3 The Elements of Marx's Theory

Marx's theory of revolution stands upon two legs. The one leg pivots upon a general theory of crisis tendencies (and, most famously of course, a theory of capitalist crisis tendencies). The other leg turns upon a particular model of classes; more specifically, upon a particular model of class agency. Between these two moments there exists an internal relationship; it is not simply that the theory requires both pillars to stand, but rather that neither component makes sense without the other.

At the most abstract level, therefore, Marx's model of revolution (or of history, which is but the same thing) can be expressed as follows: human history follows a general schema of phases, each characterised by a specific mode of production and its associated superstructural forms. Between these phases there also exists an

internal relationship, characterised by the Hegelian method which Marx made his own: each phase calls forth its own negation and thus gives rise to the phase that follows it. It does this in two ways: on the one hand, when its politico-juridical system of property relations moves out of phase with the requirements of its system of material production; and on the other, when the ascendance of a class calls forth in full maturity the corresponding negation of that class. The internal relation between the two moments lies within the realm of property relations; for classes, in Marx's view, are ultimately rooted in differential relations of production and appropriation. A revolution is simply the transition from one of these phases to another.

Even at this level of abstraction the model is contested, both from within and from without Marxism. From without there is the old charge that it does not square with the historical record; more specifically, that revolutions have not (obviously) erupted in the citadels of capitalist development, but in the outposts. On this score the model's predictive strength, and hence its claim to scientificity, is said to be void. [11] From within there is the equally familiar charge that this is simply the mechanistic optimism of the Second International codified into a grand (and reactionary) theory; the epithet that is applied -- and Marxism has more than its fair share of internal epithets -- is "stagism". Finally, at a no less contested but rather more esoteric level, there is the problem of identifying the "motor

force" of history: is it the "class struggle" or is it the internal dynamics of a given mode of production? If the latter, does the key to explanation lie in the conflict between the forces of production and the relations of production, or does it lie in the relations between the economic substructure and the politico-ideological superstructure?

In identifying these as controversies, I have said nothing about other (no less contested) issues that have exercised the minds of Marxists: for example, the meaning that is to be attached to the notion of "class agency", the limits of a general theory of crisis tendencies, and the nature of the transition from one historical phase to another. These are no less matters of disagreement than those already identified; and there are others. My purpose here, however, is not to embark upon an analysis of these conflicts. Such exercises typically end as catalogues of problems, and little else; one is left, finally, with only two options, either to elevate the problems to an object of study in their own right (and thus to construct an ever more complete catalogue) or to abandon theory altogether in favour of anti-theorism. In short, there is a difference between being obsessed with problems and being sensitive to problems.

Having said this, I hasten to add that my purpose here is precisely to provide a discussion of key problems within Marx's theory of revolution. The secret here, however, lies in selection: in distinguishing between problems that go somewhere and problems that don't go anywhere at all.

It seems to me that the most important of these problems are the following:

(1) Is the conception of "stages of history" justified? [12]

In posing the problem in these terms, I am not asking whether Marx's vision of human development is reasonable; that is another question altogether (and one I shall touch upon in considering the notion of "communist society"). Rather, the problem is whether Marxism, as a theory of human liberation, can be squared with a model of history that is quite ruthless in delimiting the preconditions for emancipation. The problem is well known, and has generated two "readings" of Marx's work, which go under the headings of "stagist" or "incrementalist" models on the one hand, and "permanentist" models on the other.

(2) Is the conception of class agency justified? Again, I do not wish to enquire whether class actors are best cast as voluntary agents or as Träger, as bearers of roles. It seems to me that this debate is best regarded as an infertile one. I shall simply assume that classes are in fact capable of acting, to some extent at least, as authors of their own destiny, a position that is not inconsistent with Marx's own, with the famous rider that they do not make their destiny under conditions chosen by themselves, but under conditions that are historically transmitted. The problem that concerns me here is twofold: first, whether classes -- and, in particular, the classes with which Marx is concerned -- are adequate to the historical roles in which they have been cast.

This again is a problem that has been high on the agenda of twentieth century Marxists, particularly given the persistent incapacity of the western proletariat to embark upon a revolutionary politics. I shall argue in chapter 6 that the Marxian account of class poses serious difficulties for the coherence of a Marxist theory of revolution. In the present chapter I shall restrict the discussion of the theory of class to the problem of class consciousness, with a view to laying the groundwork for certain of the arguments made in chapters 4 and 5.

(3) The third problem, I suggest, concerns the notion of politics. In what does an adequate Marxist politics consist? In attempting to answer this question, I shall adopt two lines of approach. The first concerns politics in capitalist society: that is, it concerns Marx's account of how classes become organised (or fail to become organised) as political agents. I shall restrict the discussion to the two "polar" classes, since it is the relations between them that are said to dynamise the whole of capitalist society.

The second line of approach concerns politics in communist society -- or, rather, the supposed lack thereof. I shall consider here two sub-themes: the first concerns the notion of the "dictatorship of the proletariat", and what Marx might or might not have meant by it. The second focusses on the relations between individualism and community -- the two guiding principles of Marx's account of communism -- in a society without politics.

3.4 Competing Accounts of Historical Change

It is so commonly assumed that Marx's theory of history is built upon a notion of distinctive and inescapable stages that the alternative model -- the theory of permanent revolution [13] -- is regarded either as something of an oddity or as a fairly radical revision of Marx's position. Certainly it is not difficult to show that the whole tenor of Marx's work is an incrementalist one. At the same time, however, there is plenty of evidence in Marx's text to show that he also employed, at varying times, a notion of permanent revolution, and that Trotsky is quite correct to attribute the origination of the theory to Marx. In what follows I shall show that both these positions may be extracted from Marx's writings. The point, however, is not to demonstrate this duality, but to interpret it. It is not the case that Marx is simply inconsistent, or confused, or even self-contradictory; nor is it merely that there is a powerful tension in his work between these two positions. The disjuncture, I shall argue, turns finally on a political issue, namely, what sort of political behaviour can be expected from the bourgeois class under varying circumstances. The issue is one that Marx does not succeed in resolving (hence the tension) and the problem thus points us towards a related problem, namely, whether the agency of classes as Marx conceives it is at all plausible.

The "incrementalist" position in Marx is well known, and I shall not restate it in any detail here. It appears in its most dramatic form in Marx's programmatic texts, of which the

Communist Manifesto -- in the opening lines of which Marx sketches for us the general schema of sequential class rule -- is merely the best known. The essence of Marx's position is that human society does not spring fully formed as if from the head of Zeus, but is always constructed on the basis of what went before; each level of human development grows out of the previous level, and each level posits the subsequent level at a certain stage of its internal development. In that most schematic of texts, the Preface to a Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy, the argument for the incrementalist reading of history is most pithily stated:

No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the womb of the old society itself. Mankind, therefore, always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve, for looking at the matter more closely, it will always be found that the task itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation. In broad outlines, Asian, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois forms of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society. [14]

The basis of Marx's disagreement with the utopian socialists is expressed here in a nutshell. What is at issue is not such categories as justice, freedom, equality, etc, but the material preconditions under which human needs can be satisfied: for "right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby." [15] On this score the theory is quite unforgiving, to the extent that in constructing a communist society out of the old capitalist order one must accept certain defects (most notably, of course, the

injustices associated with the notion of "equal right"); these are simply unavoidable prior to the full development of the material basis of communist society.

The political consequences of this position are important, and it is from these that the incessant quarrelling with the utopian socialists (and to some extent the anarchists) arises. If communist society can only grow out of capitalist society, it follows that there is no possibility of making a "leap across history", of bypassing the stage of capitalist development before reaching the stage of full communist society. It is for this reason that Marx's attitude towards capitalism is an ambivalent one (though not, of course, in the psychological sense). On the one hand his entire project is devoted to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalist society; on the other hand, capitalist society is an historically necessary stage of human development. ✓ It is for precisely this reason that Marx and Engels could regard with equanimity the havoc that the penetration of capitalism brought to Indian village society. While they saw clearly the social disruption and misery that it brought, they argued that it was only the displacement of traditional village society by capitalist relations of production that would make possible the ultimate establishment of communist society:

England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindostan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that

revolution. [16]

Nowhere is this ambivalence more apparent than in the Communist Manifesto, in those passages in which Marx in a sense sings the praises of the bourgeoisie:

The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarcely one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalisation of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground -- what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour? [17]

What are we to make of this ambivalence? Some of Marx's critics have interpreted it as a sort of transmogrified Hegelianism, in which the march of reason in history proceeds by way of contradiction. Certainly this is true in one sense, in the sense that Marx's method here is Hegelian in character. But there is much more at stake here. What is at issue is the manner in which human societies evolve to the point of producing surplus, for the core of Marx's argument is that it is only on the basis of a socially appropriable surplus product that human needs -- including the needs for freedom, for self-actualisation, and for authentic collective association -- can be met. The point is of crucial importance in evaluating whether the conception of "stages of history" is justified, and I shall return to it below.

The alternative perspective -- that of "permanent revolution" -- is most usually associated with Trotsky; in its developed form, it asserts that revolutions can be forged by the proletariat in

underdeveloped, pre- or semi-capitalist societies, that such revolutions can pass in uninterrupted fashion from the "democratic" to the "socialist" stage, through the pursuit by the proletariat of these twin goals in parallel rather than in series, and that the construction of socialism by "permanentist" means is an international rather than a national problem. [18] In this form, the theory is clearly a revision (I use the word carefully) of Marx. But it is not a radical departure from Marx, for it can be shown without difficulty that a "permanentist" perspective is employed by Marx and Engels at different times throughout their lives. Some of the evidence, to be sure, is ambiguous. For example, where Marx argues in the Communist Manifesto that

The first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy. [19]

it is possible to interpret his position either way. Michael Löwy has argued that this is clear evidence for a permanentist perspective, in the sense that "democracy" is here depicted as a task of socialist rather than bourgeois revolution. But the opposite case can be made with equal, and perhaps greater, plausibility; for Marx may mean simply -- the context is not clear -- that the proletariat can forge a socialist revolution only on the basis of a pre-existing democratic electoral machinery (in which case it must follow that the democratic revolution is the necessary precondition for the socialist revolution). Certainly this latter case is more consistent with

the kinds of arguments that Engels made, after Marx's death, in the context of the SPD's adoption of the parliamentary road to socialism.

Similarly, some of Marx's arguments appear to stand midway between the two perspectives. For example, when he argues in Moralising Criticism and Critical Morality that

The workers ... know that their own revolutionary movement can only be accelerated through the revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie against the feudal orders and the absolute monarchy. They know that their own struggle against the bourgeoisie can only break out on the day the bourgeoisie triumphs. [20]

the conception of distinct stages is clearly evident, but in a dramatically telescoped fashion, so that it is relatively easy to conceive of the one spilling over into the other. Precisely the same construction can be placed upon his treatment of the prospects of revolution in Germany in the Communist Manifesto: ✓

The Communists turn their attention chiefly to Germany, because that country is on the eve of a bourgeois revolution that is bound to be carried out under more advanced conditions of European civilisation, and with a much more advanced proletariat, than that of England was in the seventeenth, and France in the eighteenth century, and because the bourgeois revolution in Germany will be but the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution. [21]

The perspective here is neither fully "permanentist" nor "incrementalist"; the stages of revolution are conceived of as distinct, but in such a way that the one leads immediately to the other. In these formulations it is clear, however, that although Marx expects the socialist revolution to follow close on the

heels of its bourgeois precursor, the likelihood of the bourgeois revolution is not open to question.

It is precisely when Marx begins to query the inevitability of the bourgeois revolution, however, that the permanentist position in his writings begins to emerge. Of crucial importance here is the vacillation and temporisation of the German bourgeoisie in the 1840s, and particularly during the revolutions of 1848. As a class, they draw back timidly from making the final break with absolutism -- the sort of break that Marx and Engels had at various times associated with the role of the bourgeoisie in the French revolution. In disgust, he concluded that "a purely bourgeois revolution ... is impossible in Germany. What is possible is either feudal and absolutist counter-revolution or the social-republican revolution." [22] This argument raises crucial questions about the forms of political expression of the bourgeois class and the sort of statal relations that are appropriate to, or compatible with, capitalist relations of production -- questions that Marx was to ask again and again, particularly in relation to the phenomenon of Bonapartism. It is the capitulation of the German bourgeoisie to absolutism which initially triggers this train of questions, and it is in asking these questions that Marx begins to develop the embryo of the theory of permanent revolution. From the defeats of 1848 Engels concluded that

Ever since the defeat of June 1848 the question for the civilised part of the European continent has stood thus: either the rule of the revolutionary proletariat or the rule of the classes who ruled before February. A middle road is no

longer possible. In Germany, in particular, the bourgeoisie has shown itself incapable of ruling; it could only maintain its rule over the people by surrendering it once more to the aristocracy and the bureaucracy.... the revolution can no longer be brought to a conclusion in Germany except with the complete rule of the proletariat. [23]

It is perhaps typical of Engels's style in politics -- in particular, his tendency to view the field of possibilities in terms of sharp dichotomies -- that he should rule out the prospect of a "middle road". Marx, however, certainly concurred, for in the "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League" he argued with Engels that

while the democratic petty bourgeoisie [to which Marx and Engels now pinned their hopes] wish to bring the revolution to an end as quickly as possible ... it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent, until all more or less propertied classes have been forced out of their position of dominance, until the proletariat has conquered state power, and the association of proletarians, not only in this country but in all the dominant countries of the world, has advanced so far that competition among the proletarians of these countries has ceased and that at least the decisive productive forces are concentrated in the hands of the proletarians. [24]

Michael Löwy comments:

This striking passage contains three of the fundamental themes that Trotsky would later develop in the theory of permanent revolution: (1) the uninterrupted development of the revolution in a semi-feudal country, leading to the conquest of power by the working class; (2) the application of the proletariat in power of explicitly anti-capitalist and socialist measures; (3) the necessarily international character of the revolutionary process and of the new socialist society, without classes or private property. [25]

On the face of it, the evidence here is quite unambiguous, and does not need to be emphasised; the "stagist" or "incrementalist" perspective is entirely displaced by an embryonic theory of the

permanent revolution. It is, however, worth entering a small note of caution in interpreting this, and similar, texts, and this concerns what Elster has called the "bias of compromise". It is quite possible that Marx is compromising here -- for purely political purposes -- with a radical artisan constituency concerned to drive the revolution forward at once. The bias of compromise (and other biases in Marx's work) is outlined more fully in 3.6.

It might, furthermore, be objected that these ideas are developed prior to the mature treatment of capitalist society and the economics of surplus production to which Marx devotes so much of his later life; and there is certainly an important case to be made here, for it is clear that Marx conceives of socialism as a form of social and economic organisation that is predicated upon the mature development of the forces of production, the sort of development that capitalism achieves so successfully. What is at issue in these early and fleeting visions of the permanent revolution is a political problem, namely the vacillation of the bourgeoisie. But to recast the politics of the problem is not to wish away the economics, as I shall argue below. Furthermore, as I shall suggest in 3.7, Marx's thinking about the politics of the bourgeoisie is ambiguous, and there is thus no strong justification for the theory of permanent revolution in his political thought.

This is not to argue that the early visions of "permanent revolution" are dismissed or transcended in the light of the

project that produced Capital. It has been argued that they appear and reappear constantly throughout Marx's and Engels's work. It is not my purpose to prove or disprove this case. Rather, what I wish to consider here is the argument which Marx made towards the end of his life concerning the possibility of socialist revolution in Tsarist Russia. This argument, I shall suggest, contains both a restatement of the embryonic theory of permanent revolution and at the same time a serious qualification of it. In the light of this I shall return to the relationship between the economics of surplus production and Marx's project of emancipation. I shall then offer a concluding argument concerning the status of "incrementalist" and "permanentist" models of revolution in Marx and the general significance of the conception of "stages of history".

Although the entire emphasis of Marx's project is on revolution in the advanced capitalist societies, there emerges from the 1870s onwards a general interest in the prospects of revolution in Russia which reproduces crucial elements of the early embryonic theory of permanent revolution: the characteristics of combined and uneven development, the tasks of the proletariat in "backward" societies, and the international nature of the revolutionary process. What interested Marx about Russian society, of course, was the persistence of communal social structures in the form of the obshchina, the peasant commune responsible for the periodic redistribution of land and the performance of collective social tasks. Whether Russian village

society qualified for the status of "primitive communism" or not is open to question. The point is that its survival suggested to Marx the possibility of constructing upon it a developed communist society: it represented "the finest occasion that history has ever offered a people not to undergo all the sudden turns of fortune of the capitalist system." [26] In the celebrated drafts of the letter to Zasulich, however, Marx makes it clear that what is at issue is not the Russian commune system, but the sort of revolution that will be needed to build upon it an authentic communist society. [27] What sort of a revolution did Marx have in mind? On the one hand, he appears to have believed that Russia might be able to "go it alone", so to speak:

To save the Russian commune, a Russian revolution is necessary.... If the revolution comes at an opportune moment, if it concentrates all forces to ensure the free development of the rural commune, this commune will soon develop into an element that regenerates Russian society and guarantees superiority over countries enslaved by the capitalist regime. [28]

On the other hand, Marx also suggests that the projected revolution in Russia is contingent upon a simultaneous revolution in western Europe. Nowhere is this clearer than in the much-quoted preface to the 1882 Russian edition of the Communist Manifesto:

If the Russian Revolution sounds the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting-point for a communist development. [29]

Kautsky was to make much of this argument in berating the Bolsheviks for launching a "premature" revolution; and, indeed,

the Bolsheviks (including Trotsky, the chief exponent of the theory of permanent revolution) were to make much of it themselves.

Here is clear evidence for a mature conception of "permanent revolution" in Marx. What is at issue here, however, is not the evidence, but how we interpret it. It is perfectly true that, at one level, what is involved here is a repudiation of the notion of fixed and inevitable "stages of history". Indeed, Marx himself made the repudiation very clear: he accused the populist Mikhailovsky of trying to "metamorphose my historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into a historico-philosophical theory of the general path every people is fated to tread, whatever the historical circumstances in which it finds itself"; [30] and he explicitly denied that Capital was a "theory of the historical necessity for all countries of the world to pass through the phases of capitalist production". [31] Clearly, this stands in sharp contrast to the assertion in the 1867 preface to Capital that "the country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future." [32]

On the one hand, then, the "stages of history" are not a matter of immutable necessity or the basis of "iron laws" of historical development. On the other hand, however, these disclaimers are not a licence to read in Marx the opposite case, that socialist revolutions can be forged at whim without respect to either

international context or level of economic development. Marx does, after all, have clear principles about the economic bases of socialist society; it is precisely on these grounds that the lifelong conflict with the utopian socialists rests. What is at issue here is a careful analysis of historical circumstances. Having said that, it must then be added that Marx is offering here an historical analysis of a society that is, in many ways, exceptional; that he is tentatively optimistic about the prospects of revolution in the Russian case, but his optimism is nowhere near the sort of optimism he expresses at various times about revolution in western Europe (however misplaced it may have been); and that, finally, he insists that revolution in Russia is contingent upon simultaneous and successful revolution in western Europe.

What, finally, is the point of predicating socialism upon a certain level of economic development? The short answer is that, for Marx, the problem of justice can only be dealt with in a context of material abundance -- indeed, of material superabundance. Talk of right, freedom, justice, equality and so on is superfluous where these conditions do not apply: "right can never be higher than the economic development of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby." It is only when human mastery of nature and of the forces of production has produced sufficient surplus to meet all human needs that it makes any sense at all to raise the problem of justice. Strictly speaking, the problem is not solved: it simply disappears, since there is no need for principles of distributive justice when there is more



than enough for everybody. (And, conversely, justice cannot be achieved under circumstances which make principles of justice necessary in the first place). [33]

It is precisely for these reasons that Marx depicts capitalism as a progressive historical force, for no other system of economic organisation has been so successful in generating surplus (the point of socialism being to abolish the private appropriation of surplus and to socialise it). The historic destiny of capital, Marx argues,

is fulfilled as soon as, on one side, there has been such a development of needs that surplus labour above and beyond necessity has itself become a general need arising out of individual needs themselves -- and, on the other hand, when the severe discipline of capital, acting on succeeding generations, has developed general industriousness as the general property of the new species. [34]

Commenting on this passage, Bahro remarks incisively:

Labour above that immediately necessary is not something that lies in the "nature" of man, but it needs generations of capitalist compulsion to create the type of producer, the human productive force, that for the first time makes possible a communism of wealth. Bourgeois society could achieve precisely its freedom and democracy, what Marx saw as its political advances that deserved to be raised to a higher level, because labour discipline was enforced by economics.

But there is no way, Marx implies, that a pre-capitalist country can industrialise without either wage-labour or extra-economic compulsion. One of the two is needed. [35]

Either the one or the other: there is no middle road. Now, at a purely conceptual level, there is nothing to choose between these two. If we draw a necessary link between socialism and

industrialism [36] then it is possible to travel both a capitalist and a non-capitalist road to socialism. However, while there is nothing at a conceptual level to recommend either the one path or the other, there is much to be said concerning considerations of prudence. For if the history of socialist struggles in the Twentieth Century teaches anything, it teaches us that the path of extra-economic coercion can go horribly wrong.

Nor is it simply the case that there are serious political dangers in the authoritarian road to socialism; the issue goes beyond recognising dangers (and hence being sensitive to them) to a much bleaker issue. It is this: the sort of social structures - in particular, the sort of bureaucratic apparatuses -- that have been necessary to the non-capitalist road to socialism have not only proved to be exceedingly impervious to democratisation, but may in fact represent a blind alley rather than a possible road to socialism. If this is the case -- and I wish here to raise the possibility rather than to assert it -- then the authoritarian road to socialism represents not merely a detour or an alternative but a regression, and a regression that may be of such a serious magnitude as to be unrectifiable without a further revolution. There is a sense, therefore, in which Kautsky's critique of the Russian Revolution has an extraordinary resonance after the passage of seventy years, and it compels us to examine more closely the entire point of a stagist or incrementalist conception of historical development. ✓

I conclude therefore, that Marx offers us a general theory of the stages of history which derives its meaning not from notions of historical inevitability or from the uncompromising requirements of a latter-day cunning of reason, but from fairly well elaborated arguments about the social and economic requirements of justice or, more broadly, human needs such as self-actualisation and objectification. The general theory is not impervious to modification in the light of specific historical circumstances, or to the possibility of non-capitalist paths to socialism. Nor does demonstrating that Marx works from such a theory imply that notions of "permanent revolution" are absent from, or inimical to, his work. It is, however, precisely a general theory; and on the basis of the preceding analysis, I suggest that the conception of "stages of history" is, within the terms of Marx's project, a reasonable one.

3.5 Marx on Class Consciousness

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they choose": in fifteen words Marx left both an aphorism and a particular formulation of the structure/agency couple. Behind these words, however, lurks a serious problem within Marxist theory. It is this: do classes make history, or don't they? I am not here obtusely insisting on simplification where Marx employs nuance and subtlety, for this is a genuine problem. On the one hand Marx argues that history and class conflict are intimately bound up with one another: "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle." On the other hand, he

does not actually declare here that class struggle causes historical change or that it explains history; only that history is ineluctably characterised by class struggle. This would not constitute a problem if we could simply read into Marx the position that class conflict is the motive force of historical change. Unfortunately, however, we cannot do this, for there is a contending position that has been argued with great intelligence. The alternative reading holds that historical causation lies not in class conflict but in the development of the forces of production, and the conflict between these forces and the politico-juridical context of property relations in which they are embedded. [37] If this interpretation is correct then Marx's theory of revolution is seriously incoherent; for, as Elster has argued, "there is no hint of any mechanism by which the class struggle promotes the growth of the productive forces." [38] Is there any point at all, on this perspective, in appealing to the class struggle, if the dynamics of historical change lie on another level altogether?

There are a number of possible ways out of this problem. One might accept the systems equilibrium/disequilibrium model and assign to class conflict a contingent and derivative role; or one might accept the systems model but argue that on this score Marx was simply wrong; or one might attempt to invalidate the systems model; or one might try to reintegrate the two basic arguments in Marx's work in some way. Of these possible solutions, the one which does least damage to Marx is the last. As Cohen has

argued, Marx accounts for the nature of class struggle in terms of the character of the productive forces: in Marx's words, "the conditions under which definite productive forces can be applied are the conditions of the rule of a definite class of society."

[39] If we are to retain a notion of politics, some such strategy of elucidation is indicated; for the alternatives would leave us as disempowered passengers on the train of history. Nevertheless, the extent to which the tension between the class-analytical model and the systems model can be eased is limited, and the entire notion of class politics, as I shall argue in chapter 6, remains immensely problematic.

In 6.3 I suggest that Marx's views on working class politics can be unpacked into three central propositions: briefly, the positional claim that the relationship between praxis and consciousness makes the proletariat potentially an agent of revolution; the processual claim that the immiserisation of the proletariat must lead to revolution; and the similarly processual claim that technical innovation in capitalist society must eventually issue in the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism itself. Behind these claims lies a notion of rational self-interest on the part of the proletariat, which is ultimately the driving force behind socialist revolution. This rational self-interest claim in turn I take up in chapter 7. For now I turn to the relationship between praxis and consciousness as a preliminary to discussing Marx's positional claim about the working class and its politics.

3.5.1 Being and Consciousness

The central argument of Marx's early philosophical anthropology -- that consciousness is derivative of being -- runs through practically all his writing, and is rightly regarded as one of the master theses of the materialist conception of history. This particular argument is of crucial importance in evaluating the work of his inheritors; it may properly be said to lie at the heart of a Marxist ontology. Briefly, it asserts that human beings are "objective" beings, in the sense that they stand in a fundamental relationship to a world of (real) objects. The relationship is inescapable, but it can take several forms. In capitalist society it takes the characteristic form of alienation and commodity fetishism, a form in which objects acquire, or are assigned, a dominance over the men and women who create and modify them. With the abolition of class relations and exploitative relations of production, the relationship between people and objects is dialectically restored to an augmented primacy. Work becomes free, creative agency which transforms both the world and the agent, i.e. it becomes praxis, to be contrasted to the anti-praxis of class society. Human powers and needs are expressed in, and satisfied through, a process of self-externalisation and objectification.

In this ontology the realm of objects is primary, the realm of ideas derivative. This logic -- developed as a rejoinder to Hegel -- takes several forms. In some versions the logic is

extreme, so that a fairly simple (causal) correspondence between economic base and ideological superstructure is assumed. In other versions, particularly in Marx's historical writings, it is deployed in a more nuanced manner, be it merely an acknowledgement of complexity or (less happily) the use of some notion of "relative autonomy". The codification is given in the 1859 Preface: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness." [40] Rather more carefully, Marx argues in The German Ideology that

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness is directly interwoven with the material activity and the material relationships of men; it is the language of actual life. Conceiving, thinking and the intellectual relationships of men appear here as the direct result of their material behaviour.... Consciousness can never be anything except conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. [41]

and, in an "empiricist" frame of mind:

To arrive at man in the flesh, one does not set out from what men say, imagine or conceive, nor from man as he is described, thought about, imagined, or conceived. Rather one sets out from real, active men and their actual life-process and demonstrates the development of ideological reflexes and echoes of that process. The phantoms formed in the human brain, too, are necessarily sublimations of man's material life-process which is empirically verifiable and connected with material premises. [42]

Here Marx is insisting on the need for microfoundations in a theory of ideology, something he all too rarely does. It is precisely the failure to specify plausible mechanisms of ideology-formation that has left the Marxist theory of ideology in the mess it is -- a theory, as Elster puts it, that is "partly

anecdotal, partly functionalist, partly conspiratorial, and partly magical." [43] And indeed, The German ideology is something of an exception to Marx's typical cast of mind. Marx frequently abandons the anti-functionalism of this text for a directly functionalist, almost metaphysical, account of ideology and consciousness. In consequence there is a powerful tension, even in the early works, between two distinct accounts of consciousness and praxis. Sherover-Marcuse has usefully described these as "dogmatic" and "dialectical" perspectives on consciousness. [44] "A dialectical perspective", she writes,

understands that as a result of their life experience under an oppressive social system, even people who are engaged in movements for radical social change will have inevitably introjected or internalised various aspects of these conditions. It recognises that an oppressive system also binds its victims to it, that there comes to be a certain 'adherence' on the part of the oppressed themselves, to the prevailing order of unfreedom. Accordingly, a dialectical perspective towards emancipatory subjectivity assumes that in order to undo this adherence, individuals must engage in a deliberate and systematic attempt to transform their own consciousness in an emancipatory direction. [45]

The dogmatic perspective, by contrast, takes two forms. In the first, a collective agent is assumed to be "immune" to the consequences of domination; it is already emancipated, so to speak, in the midst of its oppression. In the second form,

emancipatory consciousness is taken to be unproblematic inasmuch as its eventual appearance is assured. To the extent to which the emancipating agents can be said to undergo a process of subjective development, the outcome of this process is presumed to be certain. Emancipatory consciousness is regarded as an epiphenomenon, a result of social change rather than a factor for bringing about change. [46]

Perhaps the most extreme statement of this perspective is given

in The Holy Family:

The question is not what this or that proletarian, or even the whole of the proletariat at the moment considers as its aim. The question is what the proletariat is, and what, consequent on that being, it will be compelled to do. Its aim and historical action is irrevocably and obviously demonstrated in its own life situation as well as in the whole organisation of bourgeois society today. [47]

The absence of microfoundations here needs no emphasis.

Sometimes the two perspectives are present in the same text.

Sherover-Marcuse argues that the Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right is precisely an instance of this ambiguity:

On the one hand, Marx seems to assume that the proletariat will automatically and inevitably become conscious of the need for radical revolution. On the other hand, the 'Introduction' also implies that the development of revolutionary consciousness is a project which requires an intentional practice of subjective struggle on the part of the proletariat, a struggle whose outcome is by no means preordained. [48]

This ambiguity clearly poses considerable problems for a Marxist account of politics, and indeed it corresponds to a larger tension in Marx's views on the proletariat. On two versions of the theory of revolution, the successful agency of the working class is predetermined by social forces beyond their control. In the "immiserisation" thesis -- on which the passage quoted from The Holy Family above turns -- the working class is driven by naked necessity into revolution. In the "empowerment thesis" -- a term I justify in 6.3 -- technical change and innovation in capitalist society propel the proletariat willy-

nilly into assuming control of the means of production. In neither instance is a plausible politics present. These images of politics I take up again in 6.3.

The "dialectical" perspective, by contrast, gives rise -- at least potentially -- to an account of how the proletariat, by its own efforts and through a comparatively slow and painful process of organisation, can emancipate itself and society at large. This is an authentic image of politics, and I turn now to a discussion of it.

3.6 The Politics of the Proletariat

The notion of a "pure" class politics is highly problematic. As Draper has conclusively demonstrated, Marx did not believe that society would eventually polarise into two pure classes. While other classes might be shattered and ruined by capitalism, they do not simply disappear; they limp on, rather, continually renewing themselves in their degeneracy. [49] The collective agent which will overthrow capitalist society, therefore, is a coalition of classes.

Now, Marx writes a great deal about class alliances, regarding now one, now another of the intermediate classes as potential allies of the working class. What is clear, however, is that the proletariat must lead whatever alliance is formed; it must assert its "hegemony", to use Gramsci's term. In order to do this, it

must first organise itself. In the following discussion I shall ignore the problem of which alliances are most appropriate; the problem is not without interest, but it is not of immediate concern. I shall concentrate rather on the processes by which the proletariat assumes an authentic collective character.

When dealing with Marx, more than most other writers -- and when dealing with Marx's political writings, more than most of his other work -- one must be sensitive to biases in the text.

Elster names four: the bias of wishful thinking, the bias of exhortation, the bias of anticipated censorship, and the bias of compromise. [50] In the light of these biases, there is no "purity of the text"; one must aim in exegesis at an overall sense of what Marx is arguing. I try to offer one here.

The issue here is the formation of class consciousness. The theoretical roots of this process I have already discussed above. The difficulties in the theory of collective action that are thereby posed I take up in chapter 7. Here I confine myself to (some of) Marx's comments on the formation of the proletariat into a political class.

Although the notion of the political party is of crucial importance in Marx's work, it is not the first requirement for the formation of political consciousness. Such consciousness, rather, grows organically from the life process of the proletariat itself -- as we would expect from the general theory. Thus Marx argues that

the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes. Thereupon the workers begin to form combinations against the bourgeois; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. [51]

These combinations -- i.e. trade unions -- form an important focus of Marx's political argument. His evaluation of them, however, is ambivalent. On the one hand, he claims at one point that trade unions are

the real class organisation of the proletariat, in which it carries on its daily struggles with capital, in which it trains itself. [52]

The notion that trade unions "train" the proletariat in struggle is also consistent with the general theory, and anticipates in important ways Luxemburg's theory of the mass strike (although Luxemburg, contra Marx, is highly critical of trade unions; they are not speaking of the same kind of organisation, a point I take up below). At the same time, there is the insistence that a class is also defined politically, that is, to the extent that it prosecutes a political struggle against another class. This can only be furthered through the "organisation of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party." [53] In short, the relationship between economic struggle and political struggle is not entirely clear. Marx's clearest statement of the relationship is given late in life, in the frequently quoted letter to Bolte:

The political movement of the working class has as its ultimate object, of course, the conquest of political power for this class, and this naturally requires a previous

organisation of the working class developed up to a point and arising precisely from its economic struggles.

On the other hand, however, every movement in which the working class comes out as a class against the ruling classes and tries to coerce them by pressure from without is a political movement. For instance, the attempt in a particular factory or even in a particular trade to force a shorter working day out of individual capitalists by strikes, etc, is a purely economic movement. On the other hand, the movement to force through an eight-hour, etc law is a political movement. And in this way, out of the separate economic movements of the workers there grows up everywhere a political movement, that is to say, a movement of the class, with the object of enforcing its interests in a general form, in a form possessing general, socially coercive force. While these movements presuppose a certain degree of previous organisation, they are in turn equally a means of developing this organisation. [54]

In short, what is at issue here is an organic, perhaps even a "dialectical", relationship between economics and politics. The symbiosis thus implied is reflected in Marx's single clearest statement on the political party in the Communist Manifesto:

[The Communists] have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole.

They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement.

The Communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties by this only: 1. In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality. 2. In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.

The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement. [55]

It is worth quoting the passage at some length, since the guidelines presented here provide a useful yardstick for evaluating later conceptions of the relationship between party and class. Having said that, it must immediately be added that the kinds of parties and trade unions Marx is speaking of are not recognisably those of today, or indeed of any time after the expiry of the First International. The mass bureaucratised political party or trade union was not an institution known to Marx. He used the term "party" to refer variously to his own small group of associates, the Chartist movement, and the general revolutionary cause, but not to parties in any modern sense. [56]

Thus we have an organic relationship between politics and economics. In itself these formulations do not solve the problem of how collective action is to be generated, and I shall take this issue up at some length in chapter 7. For the moment, let us consider what means this movement, once sufficiently mature, is to adopt.

Already in the Communist Manifesto Section IV Marx draws a distinction between means that are appropriate to Germany and France and means that are appropriate to England, the variations being governed by varying economic and political conditions and by variations in the class structure. Thus in France the massive weight of the peasantry affected French working class politics in a way that it did not in Germany; in England, the prevailing democratic conditions moulded strategy differently again. So, too, did the gradual extension of the franchise, and the birth of

mass democratic parties late in the nineteenth century, affect Marx's perspective. Engels was of course far more optimistic about the franchise than Marx was; it is worth quoting his words to Lafargue, cited above:

If one thing is certain, it is that our Party and the working class can only come to power under the form of a democratic republic. This is even the specific form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. [57]

Marx was less certain; but it would be quite wrong to generalise from his famous proposition in the Civil War in France that the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes. For one thing, we are probably dealing here with both a bias of exhortation and a bias of compromise; despite his reservations, Marx felt compelled to pin his colours to the mast of the Paris Commune in a gesture of solidarity; and he surely wanted to elevate the Commune to the level of an exemplar to spur others into action. And as Elster argues, he strenuously opposed the suggestion that the working class should shun all involvement with the state. [58] In 1852 he argued that the "inevitable result" of universal suffrage in England would be "the political supremacy of the working class". [59] In 1871 he suggested that "in England, for instance, the way to show political power lies open to the working class. Insurrection would be madness where peaceful agitation would more swiftly and surely do the work." [60] And in 1872 he offered the famous distinction between strategies in repressive continental societies and in the nascent bourgeois democracies. No doubt there is a bias of compromise at work here too -- Marx would

scarcely have wanted to raise the spectre of bloody revolution when his hosts were making slow and painful progress through democratic means -- but he can hardly have disapproved entirely.

When one adds to these issues the question of class alliances, it is reasonably clear that Marx's conception of proletarian politics is both complex and ambiguous. The general principles, however, are clear enough: organic growth of proletarian consciousness through struggle, formation of class into party, prosecution of the political struggle by peaceful means where possible, by forceful means where necessary. The next logical step -- politics beyond the seizure of power -- I postpone to section 3.8.

3.7 The Politics of the Bourgeoisie

The principal issue here, of course, is the theory of the state. Now, Marx's theory of the state is notoriously underdeveloped, and its underdevelopment has spawned a formidable literature on Marxist theories of the state. I shall not engage this literature here. Rather, following Elster, I shall distinguish between different moments in Marx's theorising about the state. Broadly, Elster identifies an instrumentalist theory of the state, an abdication theory of the state, and a class-balance theory of the state. The instrumentalist theory of the state is most neatly captured in the Communist Manifesto: "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common

affairs of the whole bourgeoisie". [61] Although the statement is somewhat more subtle (or can be made to seem somewhat more subtle) than it appears, it is implausible and Marx seems to have abandoned it after the collapse of the 1848 revolutions. In the version that replaced it -- the class abdication theory -- the state remains the extended functionary of capital but is not in any sense the direct extension of its "will". In this version the bourgeoisie shy away from power because their interests are better served by doing so. Instead of being an instrumentalist theory, it is a functionalist theory, although Marx does attempt some explanatory account of exactly why it is functional. The internal complexities of both versions are many, but I shall not engage them here. My purpose, rather, is to relate them to the theory of revolution.

In the first version the bourgeoisie emerges as a progressive class: it will mould the state in its own image, securing the conditions for the accumulation of capital, including democratic government as a political condition. In the second version the bourgeoisie is a regressive class: it shies away from forging the democratic revolution, preferring to throw in its lot with absolutism, Bonapartism, fascism, or whatever, rather than see its profits confiscated by the imminently victorious proletariat. The first account thus connects strongly with the incrementalist version of history, the second account with the permanentist version. It is of course no accident that the theory of permanent revolution and the abdication theory of the state were developed roughly in tandem with one another.

In the class-balance version of the theory, in contrast to both, the notion of the "autonomy of the state" is given some real bite. What emerges here is

a view of the state as an active, autonomous agent from the sixteenth century onwards, pursuing its own interests by harnessing those of others to its purpose. The basic explanation is to be found in the presence of several opposed classes, allowing the government to play an active role by mediation and divide-and-conquer. [62]

In this version, there is a triadic relationship between the two polar classes and the state in which each of the three is actively engaged in a struggle against the others. This view is superior to the other two in several respects. In the first place, it avoids the implausible instrumentalism of the first version and the equally implausible functionalism of the second. In the second place, it drops the equivocal nonsense about "relative autonomy" and the gymnastics that typically accompany it. In the third place, it corresponds more closely than the other two to the historical record. Finally, it connects powerfully to recent theories of the state which hinge on the twin imperatives of accumulation and legitimation.

How, then, does this third version of the state connect with the theory of revolution? In the first instance, it seriously qualifies the suggestion that the state can be simply "captured" by democratic processes; since the state is not merely an empty shell to be filled by whichever class has power, this strategy comes into question. In the second instance, it does not

disqualify it; the state is not an agent which is always and irrevocably an agent of capital. In this light, the problem of strategy becomes much more complex than the classical answers suggest, and I shall return to this problem in chapter 8. Finally, this version of the theory depicts the bourgeoisie as neither progressive nor regressive, merely as a class which will prosecute its interests as rationally as circumstances allow and require. It does not therefore commit the bourgeoisie to the democratic republic as the best shell for capitalism, nor yet to the Bonapartist state. There might, of course, be contingent reasons why the bourgeoisie is likely to prefer the democratic republic; among these is the likelihood that the Bonapartist state, in trampling down all opposition, grows a voracious fiscus which constantly threatens the profits of the bourgeois class. Other reasons -- affecting, for example, the mobility of labour -- are equally plausible. Since the political character of the bourgeois class thus appears in a contingent rather than in a necessary light, the theory of permanent revolution effectively collapses.

3.8 Politics Beyond Classes

Here I take up two issues. In 3.8.1 I consider the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the general form of state in the transition to communism. In 3.8.2 I discuss what sort of political processes are likely to apply within communism itself.

3.8.1 The Dictatorship of the Proletariat

Following Draper's exhaustive research, it is now clear that by the "dictatorship of the proletariat" Marx did not mean anything like the sort of dictatorship that has characterised our century. Indeed, a modern dictatorship would have been quite unrecognisable to him. Draper argues that the term means nothing more or less than a workers' state; "dictatorship" derives here from the Roman dictatura, meaning an extra-legal form of rule.

[63] It must be added at once that such extra-legal rule is not incompatible with democracy. In Elster's example, if 95% of the voters in a society forcibly change a constitution that requires 100% support for amendment, they do not act undemocratically; rather, the 5% who oppose them are undemocratic. [64]

It is also clear that Marx and Engels took the term quite seriously; contrary to certain of their apologists, they used it publicly and privately in no fewer than twelve separate places. [65] What is not clear is what relationship the term bears to their other writings on post-revolutionary society. Or rather, the text is clear but has been consistently muddled. Simply put, Marx deploys two quite different conceptions of the post-revolutionary period. Following Harding, we can call these the "dictatorship of the proletariat" model, and the "Commune" model. The first model is characterised by the capture of the state, the centralisation of state power, the (temporary) persistence of classes and politics, and the (equally temporary) persistence of the state. The closest thing to a programme that Marx offers

here is the ten points in the Communist Manifesto. The key characteristics of the dictatorship of the proletariat -- the survival of politics, classes and the state -- are implicit in those ten points, as they are in one of Marx's explicit mentions of the term in The Class Struggles in France:

The proletariat rallies more and more round revolutionary socialism, round communism, for which the bourgeoisie has itself invented the name of Blanqui. This socialism is the declaration of the permanence of the revolution, the class dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the abolition of class distinctions generally. [66]

The Commune model, by contrast, is characterised by the smashing of the state power and the immediate transition to a society without classes, politics, or the state. The need for a transitional stage is thus done away with. There is nothing in Marx's writings to suggest that these two accounts are equatable one with another; indeed, such an equation would be absurd, given that they are essentially opposite versions of post-revolutionary society. It is Engels, not Marx, who equates them (in 1891, after Marx's death):

Of late, the Social-Democratic philistine has once more been filled with wholesome terror at the words: Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Well and good, gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. [67]

This is not simply an abstruse point of theory. It has crucial implications for revolutionary strategy, impinging heavily as it does on the question of what is to be done with the state, whether transitional periods are necessary in the construction of socialism, what happens to politics in post-revolutionary

society, and so on. I shall argue in chapter 5 -- again following Harding -- that Engels's conflation of the two models has important consequences for Lenin's political theory, and by extension for the history of the Soviet Union itself. Lenin is not, of course, the only victim of Engels's excess; numerous others have made the same conflation, including, inexplicably, Elster himself. He asserts -- following Hunt -- that the Commune was "the prime historical instance of the dictatorship of the proletariat" [68] and then immediately quotes a passage from Marx which shows the opposite. Hunt's principal evidence, unfortunately, is precisely the passage from Engels quoted above. [69] The dictatorship of the proletariat must therefore be regarded as a specific form of state, characterised by classes and class politics. Its theoretical competitor, the Commune, is characterised by their absence; and communist society, on either strategy, would ultimately look much like the Commune. It is to this last issue that I now turn.

3.8.2 Politics in Communist Society

In one sense, this issue can be disposed of simply: there are none. Given Marx's tendency to associate the state with politics, politics with power and power with classes, it follows automatically that the abolition of any one must be the abolition of all. The possibility that not all power relations are class relations, or that politics may be necessary in a classless society, is not entertained. It is an implausible image which in itself need not detain us, except to observe that it is false.

The structure of its implausibility, however, is a good deal more interesting, and worth unpacking. If Marx's conception of communist society were solely a communitarian one, the absence of politics would still be implausible though not inconceivable. If everyone in society thought the same and wanted the same collective goal then it would, in principle, be possible to dispense with politics -- although such a society is hardly an attractive one. But this is not, of course, Marx's conception of communism. Marx is committed simultaneously to communitarianism and to individualism. The celebrated passage in The German Ideology about hunters, fishers, herders and critics has perhaps been taken more seriously than it was intended, but it certainly captures the spirit of Marx's communism. Marx clearly envisaged a society in which individuals, unequal in skills and talents, would be free to develop as individuals to the limits of their capabilities. That is, to quote the Communist Manifesto, "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all". Inverting the main clauses of this sentence one still gets an image of communism -- one which has found many adherents -- but it is not Marx's communism. Now, it is possible to imagine a society in which communitarian spirit and individual development go hand in hand. To imagine such a society without some form of political mediation between individuals and their community, however, is absurd. It is not unreasonable to say that such a society will never exist. Marx's conception of communism is thus one more manifestation of one of his central intellectual tendencies: the belief that all good things go

together. But in this case, as in many others, they don't; and socialists need to fill this particular gap with coherent arguments about issues like constitutions, regional autonomy, political federalism, bills of rights, and the like.

3.9 Conclusion

This brings to an end my review of the classical Marxist account of the theory of revolution. Marx's work is rich, internally inconsistent, highly suggestive and of course incomplete; and the problems it leaves for his inheritors are many. In the following two chapters I turn to a discussion of how certain key figures among those inheritors have made sense -- or failed to make sense -- of Marx's legacy.

CHAPTER FOUR

BUILDING THE MARXIST THEORY (ii):

GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

4.1 Introduction

Even before Marx's death Marxism had grown far beyond the control of its originators, sometimes in directions of which Marx and Engels disapproved, and in the century since then the growth has been exponential. In the 1970s Kolakowski could fill three volumes documenting and criticising what he regarded as only the "main currents" of Marxism. In reflecting on this growth, more than one commentator has been concerned to advance explanations for it -- some sympathetic, many hostile. None of these explanations concerns me here, and I shall offer no comment on them. My purpose in the following two chapters is of a different sort; simply put, it is to weigh the Marxism of Marx's inheritors. This is, of course, no "innocent" undertaking. I contend at once, therefore, that a group of four figures is of overwhelming significance here. The four are Kautsky, Lenin, Luxemburg and Gramsci. In these two chapters I explore and evaluate certain key components of their work.

Obviously, any selection from Marx's inheritors stands in need of justification. I offer only two defences for this selection, one

theoretical and one historical. Firstly, at a theoretical level, these four figures bring to the surface the central tensions within Marx's thought. In this connection, it is worth observing that Marxism is not a river, as Kolakowski would have it, but a web: spun across the phenomenon of modernity and anchored to the defining points of that phenomenon. The stresses and the interconnections within the web are (to say the least) of a complex sort. But it is neither complete nor undifferentiated, and at its structural nodes stand the four figures that I name.

Secondly, at an historical level (and closely related to the matter of theory) one event in the history of Marxism stands out: the Russian Revolution. This, more than any contemporary set of processes, is the great "crisis" of Marxism, the parting of the ways so to speak. It is the Russian Revolution which remains the single most important point of reference for the divides within Marxist theory. The falling out is doubly significant, for its caps -- or rather ruptures -- what is perhaps the most extraordinary phenomenon in the history of Marxism, the Second International. It also heavily colours the interpretation of that history. The Second International, in one set of readings, is the sorriest episode in the history of Marxism: the shame of August 1914 is depicted as pre-given in the nature of the International itself. In this rendering, the period 1890 - 1914 is something best forgotten. But of course it cannot be forgotten, only repressed; and, like all repressions, it takes its revenge in the most unexpected ways. If repression is the denial of ambivalence, the metaphor is singularly appropriate;

for the obverse of the petrification and betrayal -- the unBolshevised history -- is an extraordinary openness of debate, a legitimacy of dispute so to speak, which was closed off forever after 1917. As Christopher Pierson has observed,

the period prior to party "Bolshevisation", first in Russia and subsequently in Western Europe, saw a series of wide-ranging, open and heterodox debates about the strategic possibilities afforded to socialism by the development of (varying forms of) mass democracy. If Marx's discussions seem sometimes to be at a distance from any recognisable contemporary democratic practice, with the coming of the Second International we enter an era of mass democracies and mass parties which, if not quite our own, is recognisably modern. Correspondingly, the agenda-setting account of Marxism and democracy from the epoch of the Second International is of particular importance. [1]

Lenin, Kautsky and Luxemburg tower over this period. Gramsci I read as essentially a figure of the Second International; his work is above all a coda to it, composed under circumstances which permitted him a distance from the dogma of the Comintern. Trotsky, finally, I omit altogether. His significance is at some levels inescapable; but at other levels, his great contributions -- the theory of permanent revolution, and the most cogent statement ever made of a particular conception of the means/ends couple -- are historically assimilable in the debates on the Russian Revolution. The theoretical status of the concept of permanent revolution I have already taken up, and I discuss elements of the means/ends problem in dealing with the critiques of the Bolsheviks levelled by Kautsky and Luxemburg.

This justification is incomplete, as any justification for a choice must be. Only the writing of a handbook -- of a "Marxism

after Marx" -- escapes this problem. In an essay of these concerns, by contrast, the price of evaluation is incompleteness.

4.2 Kautsky and the Parliamentary Road to Socialism

It is commonplace that three intellectual currents influenced Kautsky's political development: liberalism, Darwinism and Marxism. [2] It is of course the third of these which dominates -- and which, in turn, Kautsky himself dominates during the "Golden Age" of Marxism, that period of efflorescence between the death of Marx and the collapse of the Second International. As the custodian of Marxist orthodoxy, Kautsky brings a rigorous systematisation to Marxism: a Marxist science, relying heavily on the notion of the "laws of motion" of capitalist society. Indeed, one could argue that Kautsky was a typical child of his age in this attitude to science: at times he appears to us as a worshipper in the temple of Wissenschaft, and of course this emphasis on wissenschaftlich laws leads naturally to the synthesis of Marxism and Darwinism. This use of Darwinist theory has profound implications for Kautsky's attitude to democracy -- an attitude that is at root utilitarian in character, as I shall suggest below.

Once Kautsky's fundamental views were formed, they changed very little in a very long lifespan -- from 1854, shortly after the abortive bourgeois revolutions, to 1938, when Stalinism reached its high water mark. Kautsky's theoretical outlook remains

remarkably constant throughout his maturity. In particular, of course, he remains wedded to the Erfurt Program, the theoretical argument of which he was author. It could be argued that this association with the Erfurt Program leads Kautsky to take over its schizophrenia and make it his own: certainly we can interpret Lenin's criticisms of Kautsky in this light, for the charge of "Marxism on credit" reflects the tension between the minimum and maximum programmes of the SPD. Nevertheless, despite his association with Bernstein, Kautsky insists during the debate on revisionism on the need for revolution. Revisionism, as Bernstein's intellectual offspring, held that first, there were no guarantees of history, and second, that capitalism had acquired the capacity to adapt to crisis tendencies and to manage them, if not to overcome them. The political corollary of this argument is that the need for revolution has been obviated, and a policy of reform will eventually lead, by an evolutionary process, to socialism. Bernstein is not particularly concerned with the nature and content of socialism: he declares himself (like a typical social democrat, some might be tempted to say) unable to believe in final goals. Hence the keynote of the revisionist camp: the goal is nothing, the movement is everything. It was precisely with this last sentiment that Kautsky took issue. One cannot, he argued, forego the commitment to transformation -- the ultimate goal that Bernstein eschewed.

This, after all, was the entire point of the theoretical component of the Erfurt Programme; one could not abandon this principle and remain, properly speaking, a revolutionary

socialist. There is a profound irony about the ensuing debate. The revisionists lost, but the defenders of orthodoxy won a victory that they could not afford. They had indeed put the revisionists to flight -- but it was a flight from theoretical revisionism to anti-theoretical revisionism. If theory could not be put to the purposes of reform, then so much the worse for theory. In retrospect this is vividly clear; at the time, however, the matter appeared in a very different light. Kautsky and the other defenders of orthodoxy fondly imagined that they had succeeded in holding the divergent tendencies of the party together. In fact, however, the reformists had simply abandoned all ethical commitment to socialism: unwilling to damage their magnificent organisation in struggle, they quietly bided their time, determined to steer the movement into safer waters without the embarrassment of noisy debate. That they were able to do so is manifest in retrospect, but the defenders of orthodoxy were not entirely culpable for failing to anticipate this. The SPD, after all, was the first example of a new species: the mass bureaucratised parliamentary party. Its functionaries had a positional interest in circumventing the commitment to revolution on which Kautsky and others insisted; they were determined to transform the party into a party of government, not of revolution -- and ultimately (though it is open to question to what extent this was intentional) into managers of capital. The cracks were papered over, but they could never again be cemented; the betrayal of August 1914, and the subsequent split in the socialist movement, were pre-given in the course of the debate on

revisionism. In this sense, the roots of social democracy truly lie in the Erfurt Programme. ✓

This is not to say, of course, that the spectre of socialist "parties of government" was not present. It emerges clearly in a parallel debate: the debate on "Millerandism". In importunately joining the French cabinet, Millerand had thrown into question the entire role of socialist parties in parliament: parties of government, or parties of transformation? Kautsky's position is that socialists have no mandate to sit with the bourgeoisie, that their only warrant is to sit in opposition. At the same time, of course, Kautsky is absolutely committed to a parliamentary transition to socialism; the theme of parliamentarism -- the "parliamentary road" -- remains central to his thinking from beginning to end. At the turn of the century this was not an anomalous position; Lenin had yet to formulate the principle of "smashing the state", and even when he did so it was never entirely clear whether he meant it to apply to capitalist democracies. The parliamentary road, after all, had the sanction of Marx himself, though never as the absolute principle which Kautsky made of it. Within Marx's own work, as I have argued, there is some ambiguity on the question of whether the state must be smashed or merely taken over. For Kautsky, however, there is no ambiguity: the proper task of a socialist party is to capture control of the state apparatus by parliamentary means. To some extent, the roots of this position lie in his commitment to Darwinism. When organisms enter into competition with one another, according to Darwin's model, those

that are better adapted will triumph over those that are worse. For Kautsky, the only way in which the proletariat can test its level of development is in parliamentary competition with the bourgeoisie. It is important to note that there is no particular ethical commitment in this position: if there were some other means for competition to be tested, Kautsky would have been perfectly happy with them. The point is that it is impossible for the working class to determine anything through a coup de main or the seizure of a main chance; only through open competition with the bourgeoisie can it prove the ultimate superiority of its movement. The corollary of this position, of course, is that if it loses an acquired superiority then it must yield to the bourgeoisie and return to opposition, from whence it can gird itself for a new struggle.

It is in and through parliamentary struggle, therefore, that the proletariat learns democracy, that it learns how to administer political power and to govern. (The comparison with J S Mill's position is obvious, and for good reason; both Kautsky and Mill are committed to democracy for reasons that have more to do with utilitarianism than with ethics.) In particular -- and here the contrast with the later Lenin becomes acute -- in modern societies a powerful centralised bureaucracy is necessary to execute the manifold administrative and technical tasks associated with complex industrial orders; and bureaucracies, as Kautsky perceived, can only be made accountable to centrally representative legislatures. Parliament is indispensable in

socialist society for the control of the bureaucracy. Given this, the proletariat has no option but to take over the existing state machinery through parliamentary means.

4.2.1 An "Educative" Model of Consciousness

This conception of struggle as a process of education is not incompatible with the "ontopraxeological" tradition within Marxism; indeed, this emphasis on parliamentarism could plausibly be combined with Marx's views on the structure of consciousness. In fact, however, Kautsky does not entirely subscribe to the ontopraxeological position; he opts rather for a model of consciousness that is tendentially "educative" in character. Indeed, Kautsky is properly speaking the author of the modern Marxist educative tradition. The authorship is commonly attributed to Lenin (although I shall argue that Lenin's views are much closer to the ontopraxeological position than his modern adherents, committed as they are to selective quotation, would appreciate). The betrayal of August 1914, however, stripped Kautsky of his position as Lenin's intellectual mentor, and his contribution to Lenin's thought was quickly forgotten. It is worth remembering, therefore, that Lenin derives the argument in What Is To Be Done? concerning the nature of class consciousness from Kautsky. This argument emerges most clearly in Kautsky's treatment of the role of intellectuals in the construction of a socialist consciousness -- a position that is captured in the following celebrated quotation:

Modern socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge. Indeed, modern economic science is as much a condition for socialist production as, say, modern technology, and the proletariat can create neither the one nor the other, no matter how much it may desire to do so; both arise out of the modern social process. The vehicle of science is not the proletariat, but the bourgeois intelligentsia; it was in the minds of individual members of this stratum that modern socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectually developed proletarians who, in their turn, introduce it into the proletarian class struggle where conditions allow that to be done. Thus, socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without and not something that arises within it spontaneously. [3]

This passage is heavily influenced by Engels, who, adopting a positivist view of consciousness, held that knowledge of society and the application of that knowledge are distinguishable from one another. It owes little to Marx, and clearly inverts Marx's contention that consciousness, far from determining being, is determined by it. In short, Kautsky depicts the proletariat as a class that is unable to comprehend its real interests without the assistance of an external agency. Leaving aside the question of what might be meant by "the modern social process" (a phrase that points in the opposite direction to Kautsky's central argument) here we have a model of consciousness that is external to activity rather than internal to it. In this passage we also see Kautsky's overriding concern with Wissenschaft, and his adherence to a conception of modernity impatient with its antecedents (for the insistence upon modern socialism is clearly intended to sever the organic link between popular socialist movements in the 18th and 19th century and the intellectually elaborated representations of them that followed.) At the same time, Kautsky insisted that the "day-to-day" consciousness of the

proletariat, so to speak, was a matter for their own making, through everyday struggle with the bourgeoisie; it is only the matter of theoretically elaborated consciousness that demands the intervention of a party. In this respect he is fairly close to the sorts of arguments made by Gramsci, which I take up in the following chapter.

4.2.2 The Defence of Democracy

Thus far I have attempted to illuminate two themes in Kautsky's revolutionary strategy: the need to infuse or inject a proper consciousness into the collective mind of the proletariat, and the role of parliamentary intervention as the key to the conquest of power. The first argument stands in violation of Marx's thought; the second, as we have seen, had limited, conditional sanction in Marx's writings. Given that this sanction was conditional, it could presumably be withdrawn when the prospect for a parliamentary conquest of power became less plausible; for example, when parliaments are increasingly subordinated to the executive power of the state, or integrated into the executive arm of the state, or even bypassed altogether by manipulative bureaucratic means. What is extraordinary about Kautsky's dedication to parliamentarism, therefore, is his unwavering commitment to it in time of decline. What one must bear in mind here is that the legislature in the Second Reich bore little resemblance to the form of parliamentary government in, say, Britain. The Reichstag has extremely limited powers, and the few

it had were subject to increasing qualification as Imperial Germany drifted further and further into authoritarianism. Nevertheless, Kautsky insisted that to the extent that parliament was degenerating, its decline was merely the consequence of the decline of the bourgeoisie. A proletarian conquest of power would revitalise parliament and redeem its promise as both object and instrument of socialist strategy.

This was not, perhaps, a particularly good answer to the critics of parliamentarism, who were moving closer and closer to the position that parliamentary intervention was a footless enterprise. Among the most trenchant of these critics was Anton Pannekoek, who in 1912 anticipated many of Lenin's later arguments in an attack on the traditional tactics of the Social Democrats. Pannekoek argued that

The struggle of the working class is not simply a struggle against the bourgeoisie for state power as a prize. It is a struggle against state power. The main problem of the social revolution is to increase the power of the proletariat to such a pitch that it exceeds the power of the state. The content of this revolution is the annihilation and dissolution of the instruments of state power by the instruments of the power of the proletariat. [4]

This argument clearly anticipates Lenin's argument in The State and Revolution, and approximates closely to later strategies of "dual power". Pannekoek continues:

The organisation of the proletariat which we emphasise as the most important instrument of strength for the working class must not be confused with the particular form of its present organisations and unions.... The essence of proletarian organisation is a complete ideological change in the character of the proletariat, and it is only through mass strike action that this change can be wrought. [5]

The central thrust of Pannekoek's argument is the notion of the self-development and self-emancipation of the proletariat, its need to develop its own consciousness in and through a process of struggle; a position that is most clearly articulated by Luxemburg. Since Kautsky's position on the debate on the mass strike approximated to that of the party centre -- it could not have been otherwise (despite a brief flirtation with the Left during the period of mass strikes in Belgium and France) given his entire conception of the nature of socialist consciousness -- he is quick to reply with a defence of the "good old tactic":

Such analysis clearly showed that the right way forward is not a 'new tactic' as desired by the new radicals, but the traditional tactic founded on 'building the organisation', the 'conquest of all positions of power possible', the 'study of the state and of society' and the 'education of the masses'. [6]

In short, Kautsky remains entirely committed to parliamentarism throughout his career as a Marxist, even in spite of the shifting relationship between legislatures and executives in a long span of European history. Hence his response to the phenomenon of fascism: when parliamentary democracy is under attack, the first task of the proletariat is to defend and if necessary recapture democracy as the precondition for socialist revolution:

When democracy was suppressed, the proletariat must struggle to reconquer it, since the proletariat is the only class that cannot advance without democracy. It was unthinkable, he argued, that the overthrow of the 'black' dictatorship could lead directly to the 'red' dictatorship, since a class that had been too weak to defend democracy would be unable to establish any dictatorship other than that of a clique. [7]

Democracy remained the most efficient means of revealing the balance of class forces:

What now appears as the weakness of democracy is actually the weakness of the proletariat. A working class that does not possess the strength to defend democracy has no chance, until the relationship of class forces changes, of being able to defend itself against the exploiters through violence. When we lose democracy our first and most important task is to reconquer it.... Whoever asserts that democracy has failed asserts that the proletariat itself is not yet capable of liberating itself.... The first condition for overcoming the new dictatorships is to overcome those factors which have dragged broad sectors of the proletariat to such a low moral and intellectual level. [8]

And, on a bleak note -- for it was a bleak time:

But one thing we can do above all and in all circumstances: remain faithful to ourselves. We must not become worshippers of the success of the moment; we must not jettison the ideals for which so many workers and socialists of all countries have placed their lives and liberty in jeopardy for a century, just because in special conditions our enemies have done brisk political business in the past few years with opposite methods and goals. [9]

Kautsky regards parliamentarism as something specific and normal to modern capitalism, and indeed holds that the normal development of both capitalism and parliamentary democracy is the conditio sine qua non for socialism. This was by no means an abnormal position in the Second International; the same concerns were clearly exercising the minds of the Russian Marxists. The anomalous positions were those of Lenin and Trotsky, and it was only in 1917 that Lenin departed radically from the "normal" model. What makes Kautsky unusual is his commitment to parliamentarism throughout the Second International, the war, the Russian Revolution and the Comintern.

4.2.3 The Unity of the Party

Always a systematic thinker and worker, his theses on the path to socialism are most systematically collated in The Road to Power (1909). Salvadori presents the core of the argument thus:

1) the existing regime must 'counterpose itself to the mass of the people in a decisively hostile manner'; 2) there 'must be a great party that organises the masses and stands in irreconcilable opposition'; 3) 'this party must represent the interests of the great majority of the nation and enjoy their confidence'; 4) 'confidence in the established regime, in its strength and stability, must be shaken even within its own instruments, the bureaucracy and the army.' [10]

The need for party unity within this schema clearly stands out as the dominant organisational principle. Indeed, there is a sense in which the imperatives of unity are the dominating force in Kautsky's mind during the middle years of the SPD, between roughly 1900 and 1912. Party unity, as it turned out, was a broken reed, for no party could survive the pressure of external events during these years. I have already referred to the debate on revisionism, during which, while attacking the revisionists, Kautsky sought to hold the party together. Similarly, he makes the attempt during the period of electoral reverses of 1907 - 1909, the debates on militarism and imperialism, and finally the debate on tactics. This last period witnesses the emergence of what Salvadori has termed Kautsky's "centrism" -- a centrism of organisational imperatives more than anything else. During this period the SPD threatened to split three ways: the radicals, under Luxemburg, Pannekoek and others to the left, the party bureaucrats and trade unionists to the right, and the centrists,

who, like so many centrists everywhere, were concerned with unity more than anything else. While party unity was nominally preserved, it was in fact a dead letter long before August 1914; indeed, there is a good case to be made for arguing that it would have been better for socialism if the party had split before the outbreak of war. Socialists everywhere were shattered when their parliamentary caucuses voted for war credits, but the betrayal of the SPD, the centrepiece in the diadem of international socialism, was the most shattering of all. Even then Kautsky attempted a balancing act by arguing for abstention rather than principled rejection. But centrism in a time of high political passion is only possible if one has no opinions to risk in combat, and Kautsky was never at any time without strong opinions.

4.2.4 The Logic of History and the Russian Revolution

Finally, there is a theme that is central to all socialist thought, and that is the question of the requisite level of development of capitalism. To the extent that "scientific socialism" can be distinguished from its utopian cousins, it is more on this score than on any other. Within the Second International there was broad agreement on the subject: the need to consummate the bourgeois revolution and to promote the development of capitalism to a level from which socialism could take over. While there is some ambiguity on this issue in Marx's work -- we have seen that there is plenty of textual support for the theory of permanent revolution -- the principal tendency

in Marx, for good theoretical reasons (as I argued in chapter 3) is in support of this position. Kautsky's position here is entirely orthodox. When Lenin and Trotsky attempted to short-circuit the normal development of capitalism, Kautsky embarked on a crusade against Bolshevism that was to last to the end of his life.

The issue, for Kautsky, was simply that Russia had not attained the necessary level of development of capitalism. The abortive revolution of 1905 had sparked his interest and sympathy, but even at that point he had regarded Russia as being in no way ready for socialism. Within the canon of orthodoxy the Bolsheviks had only one slim support on which to lean: the prospect of a simultaneous revolution in western Europe. (Indeed, they forged the revolution of November with this desperately optimistic hope in mind, apparently without giving much thought to what the consequences of quiescence in Europe would be. It was all very well to say that without the European revolution the Bolshevik enterprise was doomed to failure, but one could scarcely make of this a principle of governmental policy, except by conceding defeat and handing over to a bourgeois government.)

In a context of sufficient capitalist development, the problem at hand was principally one of time: in such a context, the proletariat could mature and develop through an experience of the exercise of political power, without the stark desperation of economic collapse and political degeneracy to cope with. The

issue for socialists was not whether the preconditions were present -- in western Europe they seemed undeniably to be present -- but whether the proletariat was sufficiently developed to take over power, to extend democracy from the political to the economic system. The relative maturity of the proletariat, seen in this light, is itself a precondition for the transition to socialism, a precondition that influences and is influenced by other preconditions.

In Tsarist Russia none of this was possible. Capitalism remained comparatively undeveloped; any socialist undertaking would have to rely on a simultaneous revolution in western Europe, which for Kautsky was simply not on the agenda; and in the absence of a democratic tradition in which the proletariat could grow to maturity, the Bolsheviks would inevitably have to resort to a dictatorship. But such a dictatorship would not only be unable to implement a socialist programme; it would, in a fundamental sense, be in contravention of the entire Marxian project.

Salvadori explains Kautsky's position as follows:

In 1891 Engels, in explaining the connection between democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat, effectively ruled out -- in the spirit of Marx -- any confusion between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dictatorship of a party: 'the democratic republic is the specific form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.' In sum, it was unthinkable for Marx that the dictatorship of the proletariat, which he said must rest on 'universal suffrage exercised by the entire people', should take the Bolshevik form of a regime founded on the 'right to vote of a particular and privileged class'. [11]

Kautsky was perhaps unwise to appeal to Engels, for as we shall see no small part of the Bolshevik programme flowed from Engels's

conflation of two distinct models of the post-revolutionary state which Marx was always careful to distinguish. The point, however, is that for Kautsky the Bolshevik enterprise was not only a premature and putschist undertaking but violated Marx's own precepts in a serious fashion.

If the Bolsheviks were not pursuing socialism, what was to be the future of the Russian Revolution? Here Kautsky is particularly interesting, for he is among the first to suggest that Bolshevism had introduced a form of society that was neither socialist nor capitalist, but was in fact "state capitalist". This issue becomes an important debating point in twentieth century Marxist circles: is the Soviet Union a socialist society, is it some sort of "socialism gone wrong" (state socialist, or in Trotsky's words a "degenerated workers' state") or is it "state capitalist"? Kautsky argues that it is the last:

Industrial capitalism has ceased to be private and has become state capitalism. At first the two bureaucracies, public and private, stood opposed to each other in critical, even hostile, manner. The worker had some possibility of forcing at times one, at times the other, to back down. But now the state bureaucracy and the bureaucracy of capital form a single whole; this is the final result of the great socialist transformation wrought by Bolshevism. It is the most oppressive despotism Russia has ever known. The replacement of democracy by the arbitrary power of the workers' councils, which were supposed to expropriate the expropriators, has now led to the arbitrary domination of a new bureaucracy and has reduced democracy to a dead letter.
[12]

There is a profound irony in Kautsky's charge that under the Bolsheviks "the state bureaucracy and the bureaucracy of capital form a single whole" -- for this is precisely the central tenet

of the theory of state monopoly capitalism, which had served as Lenin's principal theoretical justification for characterising capitalism as a regressive rather than a progressive force in the age of imperialism.

Nor could the Bolshevik enterprise be seen as a kind of "barbaric road to socialism", for Bolshevism contains its own inbuilt Thermidorian reaction: a reaction generated not by another party but by the internal forces within the same party. In short, Bolshevism was the political equivalent of fascism: the point of comparison was that both infrastructures served to maintain a regime of despotic power that transformed the proletariat and with it all society into a completely subjugated mass.

In short, what is at issue here is not simply the economic structure of society but its political superstructure. In this argument Kautsky has anticipated not only subsequent debates on the class structure of the Soviet Union, but also the liberal critique of its politics; and this at a time when many liberals were sympathetic to the Soviet undertaking.

What were the Bolsheviks to make of this? Relying as they were on a proletarian revolution in western Europe, this attack from the foremost theoretician of the proletariat came as a terrible shock and threatened their entire enterprise. It is scarcely surprising that Lenin responded in such vituperative terms. The heart of

his rejoinder, of course, is that Kautsky had turned renegade: reneging not only on Marx but on his own earlier Marxism. But the charge was, as Salvadori puts it, "exceedingly frail":

For the positions which Kautsky had developed precisely during the period in which Lenin considered him a "master" and the "chief of the German revolutionaries" were all such as to lead him inevitably to the sharpest opposition both to the tactics and strategy of the Bolsheviks in the seizure of power and to the manner in which they established their dictatorship after it. [13]

What Kautsky had always maintained -- and Lenin's refusal to grant this is disingenuous -- was that the dictatorship of the proletariat could mean nothing other than the rule of the proletariat on the basis of democracy. Democracy is not conceived here as a means to the end of socialism (to be replaced by some other means if necessary); rather, both are indispensable means to a larger end, namely, the abolition of all exploitation and oppression. In forgoing democracy, in ignoring the imperatives of history, the Bolsheviks were aborting their own project. Ignoring the logic of history would destroy whatever economic basis for further development there was in Russia, and thus issue in economic collapse. Ignoring the need for democracy would produce a barbaric political system far worse than what it replaced. ✓

Kautsky's logic in regard to this last proposition is exceedingly interesting, and is worth unpacking. Classes can rule but not govern, he argues; a class is "an indeterminate mass, only an organisation can govern." [14] Parties, or coalitions of parties, govern, not classes. Now, parties do not represent

class interests simpliciter; "a class interest, or even the class interest, can be represented in very different ways by different tactical methods." [15] Furthermore, a class may be fragmented in its allegiance to parties, and the class itself may disagree on which party or coalition of parties most adequately represents its interest(s). Thus a "ruling" class may seek a change in its governmental representation, when a majority of it comes to prefer the policies of a competitor. Only multi-party democracy and political pluralism can satisfy the requirements of political mediation between classes and parties. The argument is carried by the proposition that class interests are not simple in character, and that parties are not capable of representing class interests in an uncomplicated way. It is an argument that is familiar from "bourgeois" democratic theory, but no less penetrating for that; Kautsky perceived very clearly that the failure to tolerate dissent and openness in politics would issue in the ossification of the Russian res publica. I shall argue below that Rosa Luxemburg's arguments bear a striking similarity to some of the central propositions in Kautsky's case against Bolshevism.

4.2.5 Conclusion

Perhaps more than most of Marx's inheritors, Kautsky has been the victim of history. His crusade against Bolshevism earned him the full wrath of Lenin and Trotsky, and they had the dialectic of success on their side. To all intents and purposes, he is today

forgotten as a major figure in the Marxist canon. Yet his central intellectual arguments -- as opposed to his political practices in the SPD -- are internally consistent, and, with the exception of some of his views on class consciousness, have clearly demonstrable roots in Marx's thought. His account of history is powerfully influenced by nineteenth century conceptions of science, and in this respect he was clearly a child of his age; but, one might add, the same can be said of Marx himself. Kautsky's central strategy, furthermore, is very much alive and at work in modern Eurocommunist parties; as Hodgson puts it, "his political position is remarkably close to that of present-day Communist Parties". [16]

Finally, his critique of the Russian Revolution is an extraordinarily penetrating one, and in key respects history has sided here with Kautsky. In other respects, however, the judgement of history has gone against him; here, as Claudin has noted,

history seems to be playing one of its tricks. It justifies Lenin against Kautsky and Kautsky against Lenin. But behind this paradox there lies a profound truth. [17]

The truth at issue is that neither the Leninist strategy nor the Kautskian strategy will do. The absence of democracy guarantees the Thermidorian collapse of the revolution, while reliance on it alone precipitates the fate of Salvador Allende and the Chilean socialists. Does this mean that some "third way" is indicated? Possibly; I take up this issue in chapter 8. For now, I turn to what is on the face of it a third way, the political strategy of

Rosa Luxemburg.

4.3 Luxemburg and the Militant Road to Socialism

A number of crucial themes within Marxism coalesce in the life and work of Rosa Luxemburg. She was born in 1870, [18] the year before the Paris Commune, making her a year younger than Lenin; and she died some five years before him, in the forefront of a doomed revolution. Two failed experiments thus mark the extremities of her life, and such circumstances are indeed fitting. For in one sense her entire project is a failure, undermined fundamentally by what Russell Jacoby has called the dialectic of defeat. But in another sense this project is a resounding success, fusing in an extraordinary but coherent blend themes from both liberalism and socialism in a fashion that twentieth century socialists can ill afford to ignore. Of course, attempting such syntheses readily invites the charge of revisionism (although it is all too rarely explained why this should be a sin). And yet none of her contemporaries reproduces so closely the fundamental themes of Marx's own politics: the commitments to internationalism, to democratic politics both in and after revolution, to the self-emancipation of the proletariat, to the organic relationship between party and class, to universalisable principles rather than to particularist ones. These commitments, furthermore, are inscribed in Luxemburg's practical as much as her theoretical politics; she remains a prime example of the "unity of theory and practice" that is

integral to Marxism. Of all her contemporaries, finally, she was perhaps the only one to attempt the development of Marx's economic doctrines in a rigorous way.

One must be careful, however, not to make too much of the affinity between Luxemburg and Marx. If she arrived at a position remarkably similar to Marx's, it was by her own efforts, rather than by a wholesale reproduction of Marx's thought. In crucial respects, furthermore, her account of socialism is a fundamentally humanist one; in this regard, Perry Anderson is quite wrong to attempt to distance her from what he terms "western Marxism". [19] It was no accident, after all, that she and Jogiches objected to the adjective "communist" at the founding of the KPD. Nor can this preference be attributed to tactical expediency, for to do so is to underplay her disagreement with the Bolsheviks, as Norman Geras and others have tried to do. In this respect, much is made of the fact that her critique of Bolshevism was not published in her lifetime. But the fact is that she was only persuaded with the greatest of difficulty (ironically, by Levi himself, in September 1918) not to publish, and even then because Levi only succeeded in convincing her that she had to clarify her position. It is fair to assume that had she survived the German Revolution she would have publicly aired her considerable differences from Bolshevism. [20]

The theoretical and practical position which Luxemburg stakes is thus of enormous interest. It represents something different

from both social democratic reformism and from insurrectionary Bolshevism. In what follows I shall attempt to delineate this position and then to evaluate it.

4.3.1 A Third Course?

The charting of a third course begins very early on, as far back as her first major work, Reform or Revolution. In this intervention in the debate on revisionism, she castigates Bernstein for arguing that capitalism is no longer heading for a collapse. In contraposition, she reasserts the orthodox position, that the economic contradictions of capitalism must finally become insupportable and issue in a collapse of some sort. But the "inevitability" thus affirmed is not identical to asserting the inevitability of socialism. The choice, rather, is between socialism and barbarism (especially in the form of international war). Socialism must be struggled for, and the proper course of struggle is something different from both Lenin's vanguardism and Kautsky's parliamentarism: neither the violence of the minority nor the numerical superiority of the majority. Socialism would arise, rather, from economic necessity coupled with the comprehension of that necessity:

It is not true that socialism will arise automatically and under all circumstances from the daily struggle of the working class. Socialism will be the consequence only of the ever-growing contradictions of capitalist economy and comprehension by the working class of the unavoidability of the suppression of these contradictions through a social transformation. [21]

That is, Luxemburg's theory is a theory of willed action, predicated upon an adequate consciousness. The precise nature and origin of this consciousness is of considerable importance, as I shall try to argue below. For the moment, it must be noted that this notion of "action" is not tied to an account of "mature conditions for action". While some notion of maturity is obviously appropriate here, it is nothing like the notion that Kautsky develops. For Kautsky, a precise set of criteria must be met before a coup de main is possible, and any premature seizure of power must therefore be catastrophic for the working class. Luxemburg, in sharp contrast, argues that

Since the proletariat is not in a position to seize political power in any other way than 'prematurely'; since the proletariat is absolutely obliged to seize power 'too early' once or several times before it can enduringly maintain itself in power, the objection to the 'premature' seizure of power is nothing more than a general opposition to the aspiration of the proletariat to take state power.

Just as all roads lead to Rome, so, too, we logically arrive at the conclusion that the revisionist proposal to abandon the ultimate goal of socialism is really a recommendation to renounce the socialist movement itself. [22]

The argument is powerfully reminiscent of Marx's characterisation of proletarian revolutions in The Eighteenth Brumaire, in a passage which Luxemburg also quotes in Reform of Revolution? The passage reads:

Proletarian revolutions, like those of the nineteenth century, criticise themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continuously in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin it afresh, deride with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses, and paltriness of their first attempts, seem to throw down their adversary only in order that he may draw new strength from the earth and rise again, more gigantic,

before them, recoil ever and anon from the infinite prodigiousness of their own aims, until a situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves cry out:

Hic Rhodus, hic salta! [23]

The critical emphasis on willed action poses the next obvious problem, the problem of organisation. It is an issue which remains of central significance throughout Luxemburg's life, and the position she works out early on in her career remains essentially unchanged. This position is of course given in her Organisational Question of Russian Social Democracy, in which she responds to Lenin's One Step Forward, Two Steps Back. Since the latter text is practically simultaneous with What Is To Be Done? we can take Luxemburg's rejoinder to Lenin as being a rejoinder to the vanguard thesis as a whole. In a trenchant attack on democratic centralism, she writes:

For this reason, the construction of centralism in Social Democracy, as Lenin desires, on the basis of these two principles -- 1) the blind subordination of all party organisations in the smallest detail of their activity to a central power which, alone, thinks, plans and decides for all; and 2) the sharp separation of the organised kernel of the party from the surrounding revolutionary milieu -- seems to us to be a mechanistic transfer of the organisational principles of the Blanquistic movement of conspiratorial groups to the Social Democratic movement of the working masses. And Lenin identified this perhaps more rigorously than any of his opponents could when he defined his 'revolutionary social democrat' as the 'Jacobin indissolubly connected with the organisation of the class-conscious proletariat.'

The fact is, however, that Social Democracy is not bound up with the organisation of the working masses; rather, it is the very movement of the working class. Social Democratic centralism must, therefore, be of essentially other coin than the Blanquist. It can be nothing but the imperative summation of the will of the enlightened and fighting vanguard of the working class as opposed to its individual groups and members. This is, so to speak, a 'self-central-

ism' of the leading stratum of the proletariat; it is the rule of the majority within its own party organisation. [24]

A number of crucial themes emerge here. First is the theme of self-development, indeed of self-emancipation. Luxemburg insists on the right of people to move into the party as they become politically conscious. This obviously raises the question of consciousness, an issue I shall turn to presently.

Second, there is the theme of participation in public life, participation being one of the vehicles for self-emancipation. This in turn leads to the themes of responsibility and accountability, and these too I shall pick up in due course. For the moment, it is sufficient to note the strong emphasis on the sphere of public discourse, the res publica if one wishes, in Luxemburg's thought.

Third, there is the theme of democracy as an ongoing process in working class politics, coupled with the insistence on democratic rights (free speech, right of assembly, right to voice dissenting opinions, and so on). This cluster of themes -- self-emancipation, political accountability, democratic rights -- anticipates her critique of the Bolshevik revolution, in which the same political concerns are restated with great forcefulness and prescience. In this sense, the second major critique of Lenin is in key respects an extension of the first. By then her vision of socialist politics was fully developed, so that the second critique, particularly when read in conjunction with the first, has an extraordinary and tragic resonance.

4.3.2 Consciousness and Action

The twin themes of willed action and authentic political organisation are brought together in her third major work, the essay on the mass strike. Anticipating the great bifurcation in the socialist movement, she specifies the delicate course which socialism must chart:

The world-historical forward march of the proletariat to its final victory is, indeed, not 'so simple a thing'. The original character of this movement consists in the fact that here, for the first time in history, the popular masses themselves, in opposition to all ruling classes, impose their will. But they must posit this will outside of and beyond the present society. The masses can only form this will in a constant struggle against the existing order, only within its framework. The unification of the broad popular masses with an aim reaching beyond the whole existing social order, of the daily struggle with the great world transformation -- that is the task of the Social Democratic movement, which must successfully work forward on its road to development between two reefs: abandonment of the mass character or abandonment of the final aim; the fall back to sectarianism or the fall into bourgeois reformism; anarchism or opportunism. [25]

What comes through most clearly here is Luxemburg's emphasis on the masses, on mass activity, and on the active agency of the proletariat. What is most signally at issue is the theme of participation; there is, in Luxemburg's work, an almost Rousseauist democratic streak that finally condemns all forms of representation as forms of misrepresentation. Beyond this -- and here again a theme from participatory democracy emerges -- is the educative value of participation; what Luxemburg is emphasising here is the need for the masses to learn through participation and struggle. The process of education is thus cast in all its essentials as a process of self-education, and here again

Luxemburg stands very close to Marx. Consider, in this regard, Marx's celebrated characterisation, in The German Ideology, of the educative effect of revolution:

Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew. [26]

In short, Luxemburg is arguing, with the dialectical Marx, for an ontopraxeological model of consciousness:

In the case of the German workers the class consciousness implanted by the Social-Democrats is theoretical and latent in the revolution when the masses themselves appear on the political battlefield this class consciousness becomes practical and active. A year of revolution has therefore given the Russian proletariat that 'training' which thirty years of parliamentary and trade-union struggle cannot artificially give to the German proletariat. [27]

And so the three crucial themes -- action, organisation, and consciousness -- merge:

Every real, great class struggle must rest upon the support and cooperation of the widest masses, and a strategy of class struggle which does not reckon with this co-operation, which is based upon the idea of the finely stage-managed march out of the small well-trained part of the proletariat is foredoomed to a miserable fiasco. [28]

Thus the mass strike, the most powerful weapon in the arsenal of the proletariat: not a defensive down-tools, as Kautsky and the majority of the SPD would have it, but "the totality-concept of a whole period of the class struggle lasting for years, perhaps

decades". [29]

The mass strike is merely the form of the revolutionary struggle. Every fluctuation in the relations of the contending powers, in the development of the parties and the division of classes, in the position of the counter-revolution, influences the strike action immediately in a thousand invisible and scarcely controllable ways. But the strike action itself hardly ceases for a moment. It merely changes its forms, its dimension, and its effect. It is the living pulse-beat of the revolution, and at the same time its most powerful driving wheel. In a word, the mass strike, as the Russian Revolution shows it to us, is not a crafty means discovered by subtle reasoning in order to make the proletarian struggle more effective, but it is the mode of movement of the proletarian mass, the phenomenal form of the proletarian struggle in the revolution. [30]

The powerful images of spontaneity and energy deployed here have led many commentators on the Left to dismiss Luxemburg's strategy as "spontaneist". But in fact the question of leadership is not left out of this account: it is organically incorporated, in a way that gives it space for action while simultaneously preserving the authentic character of proletarian self-emancipation:

To give the slogans, the direction of the struggle; to organise the tactics of the political struggle in such a way that in every phase and in every moment of the struggle the whole sum of the available and already released power of the proletariat will be realised and find expression in the battle stance of the party; to see that the resoluteness and acuteness of the tactics of Social Democracy never fall below the level of the actual relation of forces but rather rise above it -- that is the most important task of the 'leadership' in the period of the mass strike. [31] ✓

The account of socialist politics thus far is an attractive one: politically authentic, mass-based, participatory, educative, uncompromising, principled. It becomes even more attractive when read in conjunction with her account of post-revolutionary

society -- an account which emerges implicitly in her critique of the Bolshevik Revolution. As a preliminary to an evaluation, therefore, I turn to this critique.

4.3.3 Critique of the Bolshevik Revolution

Although Luxemburg, as I shall argue below, adhered in a certain sense to the hypothesis that the breakdown of capitalism provided the preconditions for socialist transition, she does not seem to have held to the general conception of "stages of history" in the way that Kautsky did. In consequence, her critique of the Bolsheviks does not turn on the question of prematurity. As I argued above, Luxemburg was not at all averse to the notion of premature seizures of power; indeed, she argued that in no other way could the proletariat possess itself of state power than through a succession of premature seizures. Unlike Kautsky, she is not in the slightest concerned at the fact that the Bolsheviks were attempting to forge a socialist revolution in a semi-capitalist society. Like Kautsky, however, she develops a very sharp attack on the political forms which emerged in the post-revolutionary period. Where Kautsky's critique hinged at least partially on the failure of the Bolsheviks to follow the parliamentary road to socialism, Luxemburg's critique turns on the Bolshevik failure to protect civil liberties in the post-revolutionary period. There is a certain sense, therefore, in which the critique of 1917 is essentially an extension of the critique of Lenin of some fifteen years earlier.

The issue which most angered her was, of course, the Bolshevik decision to abolish the Constituent Assembly. That decision was variously defended by Lenin and Trotsky on the grounds that the Assembly was essentially a bourgeois representative organ, far inferior to the council democracy that they proposed to extend in its place. Part of the justification for this argument was Lenin's contention in The State and Revolution that parliaments were essentially "talking shops" with no role to play in socialist society. Luxemburg argues that the dictatorship of the proletariat requires the broadest possible democracy -- including parliamentary democracy -- for the political education of the proletariat:

Yes, indeed! Dictatorship! But this dictatorship consists in a particular manner of applying democracy and not in doing away with it, in energetic and determined encroachments on the well-entrenched rights and economic relations of bourgeois society. [32]

Here again the comparison with Mill and his emphasis on the educative effects of democracy is pertinent. Indeed, the comparison strengthens as her critique deepens:

Freedom for supporters of the government only, for members of one party only -- no matter how numerous they might be -- is no freedom at all. Freedom is always freedom for those who think differently. Not because of any fanaticism about 'justice', but because all that is instructive, wholesome and purifying in political freedom depends on this essential characteristic, and 'freedom' effectively loses all meaning once it becomes a privilege. [33]

Like Mill, she defends political freedom at least partly on the grounds that it has salubrious effects for society as a whole. The failure to secure the central civil liberties, even in time

of revolutionary crisis, must ultimately lead to the collapse of all public life and the degeneration of the society as a whole:

But with the suppression of political life throughout the country, life in the Soviets must become more and more crippled. Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of the press and of assembly, without the free struggle of opinion [i.e. the classical 'bourgeois freedoms'] life in every public institution dies down and becomes a mere semblance of itself in which the bureaucracy remains as the only active element. Public life gradually falls asleep. [34]

This, she argues, is not the dictatorship of the proletariat, but a dictatorship in the Jacobin sense, in the bourgeois sense.

Thus her conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat exactly parallels Kautsky's, in the sense of being the rule of the proletariat on the basis of democracy. But it is much more than that: above all, it is an image -- like so many of Luxemburg's images -- of energy:

Socialism in life demands a complete spiritual transformation in the masses degraded by centuries of bourgeois class rule. Social instincts in place of egotistical ones, mass initiative in place of inertia, idealism which conquers all suffering. No one knows this better than Lenin. But he is completely mistaken in the means he employs. Decree, dictatorial force of the factory overseer, Draconian penalties, rule by terror -- all these things are but palliatives. The only way to a rebirth is through the school of public life itself, the most unlimited, the broadest democracy and public opinion.... Only experience is capable of correcting and opening new ways. Only unobstructed, effervescing life falls into a thousand new forms, brings to light creative forces itself, corrects all mistaken attempts. [35]

Thus again the theme of the res publica, the political space. Like Kautsky's, her critique is a deadly forecast of the future course of the Soviet experiment. Like Kautsky, she predicts that

the failure to make the bureaucracy accountable to freely elected representative institutions will lead to corruption and ossification: "public control is indispenably necessary. Otherwise the exchange of experience is only possible within the closed circle of the new regime. Corruption becomes inevitable." [36] Unlike Kautsky, however, she does not seem to have entertained the idea that the circumstances under which the revolution was launched were its own death sentence. And it is precisely the relationship between activity and circumstances which is the most problematic issue in Luxemburg's thought, as I shall now argue.

4.3.4 Conclusion

Structurally, Luxemburg's argument divides into two parts. On the one hand there is the notion of objective conditions, or circumstances of revolution. On the other hand, there is the idea of subjective conditions, or the activity by which a revolution is forged. A great part of Luxemburg's work is devoted to showing that the objective conditions are present in her own time: that capitalism must "break its neck", as she remarked to Jogiches in planning Reform or Revolution? [37] History does not guarantee a socialist future, but it does guarantee the collapse of capitalism, a collapse which may issue in either socialism or barbarism, depending on what men and women do about it. In this connection it must not be forgotten that Luxemburg was an economist of considerable ability -- which does not make her analysis of capitalism correct, but merely alerts us to how seriously she took this part of her work. Political

energy, self-education, the will to try, the possibilities afforded by the public space -- these are the subjective conditions which go hand-in-glove with their objective counterpart. There are times, however, when she seems to believe that energy alone is sufficient. The tendency is understandable, given her own character and the driving themes of her thought. But energy alone is not enough, as she herself knew. To apply Luxemburg's "third course" -- if that is what it is -- both sets of conditions must obtain. There is a tragic sense, therefore, in which we are returned right to the start of her work, to the critique of Bernstein, for a re-evaluation. I shall argue in subsequent chapters that in retrospect Luxemburg does not win this contest; and her entire life's work is thus called into question.

CHAPTER FIVE

BUILDING THE MARXIST THEORY (iii):

BOLSHEVISM AND BEYOND

5.1 Introduction

While Luxemburg and Kautsky stand at opposite poles of German Social Democracy, they are brought together in a curious sense by a common opposition to Bolshevism. Their opposition is "common" in only the most limited sense, of course; where Kautsky is an implacable enemy, Luxemburg is a sympathetic though harsh critic. Nevertheless, the theme of politics links their respective critiques of Leninism. In this chapter I turn explicitly to Lenin's political thought and to a further critique of it from the Left, namely the work of Gramsci. Seen from this perspective, Lenin binds the whole of the socialist movement together, either positively or negatively. In this sense at least it is crucially important to get some handle on his work. It might be added that Gorbachev's call for a "return to Lenin" makes this task no less important. I shall thus devote the first part of this chapter to a discussion and critique of key elements of his political thought.

Gramsci is a rather more difficult figure to engage, for reasons that I shall discuss below. To say the least, he can be approached from several perspectives. The perspective I adopt

here is already indicated: that Gramsci's work is essentially a rejoinder to Lenin, though not of course only that.

5.2 Lenin and the Insurrectionary Road to Socialism

It is often said that, of all Marx's inheritors, it is Lenin who provides the most cogent account of politics. Since Marx's own account is so badly flawed, this is an important and promising claim, and in what follows I shall investigate it in some detail. I shall approach Lenin's treatment of politics in two ways: through a reflection on his treatment of the question of class consciousness, and through a discussion of the problem of the post-revolutionary state. These two themes in Lenin's work, I shall argue, are riddled with ambiguities, and the ambiguities have important consequences for his account of politics itself.

If Kautsky has been largely forgotten, Lenin has been alternatively deified and vilified; and in the case of both figures, the historical image we inherit is a false one. In the two versions of Lenin he is viewed either as the fount of revolutionary wisdom or as the author of a soulless communism that aims at the destruction of the human spirit. In presenting these as the dominant images of Lenin, however, I do not wish to suggest that the "real" Lenin lies midway between these two extremes; for the images are not partial in character, they are false. I shall regard Lenin simply as a Marxist theoretician of crucial significance, attempting to forge an adequate Marxist politics under circumstances to which Marx gave little attention

and at a time in which the international socialist movement was in more or less constant crisis. This is not to say, of course, that I regard the resulting politics as adequate to its object; indeed, I shall argue that not merely is it inadequate in relation to its two central referents, political consciousness and the state, but is in many of its variants an inversion of Marx's own principles of political organisation.

To argue such a position from within Marxism is not, of course, an easy task; not only does one invite the same tarbrush with which Kautsky was daubed, one must also battle against the other half of the "dialectic of defeat" that confuses the interpretation of Luxemburg's work: just as failure is its own condemnation, so too is success its own guarantee, and in confronting Lenin one faces the reality that here is the first Marxist theoretician and organiser successfully to lead a revolution against capitalist society. Of course, one must instantly add that there are large question marks over whether the Russian Revolution was "led" at all, whether the Bolsheviks managed in fact to "smash the state", and whether the context in which they fought their revolution was a capitalist one in the first place. These are important issues in any critique of Lenin's politics. However, the critique that I attempt to develop here does not hinge on these issues (although it does of course touch on them) but rather depends on an analysis of the meanings that Lenin gives to the terms "politics" and "the state".

I shall approach Lenin primarily through two texts: What Is To Be

Done? and The State and Revolution. This is not to suggest that these are somehow definitive of his politics; certainly the former is not. They provide, however, useful points on which to anchor a larger argument.

5.3 Consciousness and Politics

Like most of the other major figures in the Second International, Lenin is from the outset of his career both an organiser and a theoretician; and indeed, Lenin's second major piece of Marxist scholarship is specifically concerned with the problem of political organisation, namely, What Is To Be Done? Since this reference point remains of crucial significance to Leninists, it is worth devoting some attention to Lenin's argument.

The core of Lenin's position is that the dominant forms of proletarian organisation were, in effect, innocent of politics. The two forms uppermost in his mind are "economism" and "spontaneism"; by the first he means organisation at the workplace without reference to the problem of gaining state power, while the second indicates a misconceived belief in the capacity of the proletariat to engage in political activity without the assistance of an external agency. Lenin's criticism of each hinges on the same pin: that the proletariat is incapable of arriving at a "correct" socialist consciousness without the aid of a directing force, in this case the political party. The argument is derived from Karl Kautsky, and Lenin, in citing Kautsky in 1902, is of course appealing to the highest authority

of socialism. The relevant passage, which Lenin characterises as "profoundly true and important", I have already quoted, but it is worth reproducing:

Modern socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge. Indeed, modern economic science is as much a condition for socialist production as, say, modern technology, and the proletariat can create neither the one nor the other, no matter how much it may desire to do so; both arise out of the modern social process. The vehicle of science is not the proletariat, but the bourgeois intelligentsia [Kautsky's italics]; it was in the minds of individual members of this stratum that modern socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectually developed proletarians who, in their turn, introduce it into the proletarian class struggle when conditions allow that to be done. Thus, socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without and not something that arose within it spontaneously. Accordingly, the old Hainfield program quite rightly stated that the task of Social-Democracy is to imbue the proletariat with the consciousness [Lenin's italics] of its position and the consciousness of its task. There would be no need for this if consciousness arose of itself from the class struggle. [1]

As I have argued, Kautsky's position here stands in an ambiguous relationship to Marx's; while he is firmly on Marx's ground in arguing that knowledge arises out of the "modern social process", his characterisation of that process assumes, following Engels, that knowledge and the application of knowledge are separable from one another, a position which clearly contradicts Marx's own. Lenin, however, does not even take over Kautsky's ambiguity; in a stark codification, he comments:

Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement, the only choice is -- either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for mankind has not created a "third" ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or an above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle the

socialist ideology in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree, means to strengthen bourgeois ideology.

[2]

The socialist project, in short, depends on an unforgiving discipline that proscribes all "freedom of criticism" (which, according to Lenin, means simply the "freedom to introduce bourgeois ideas and bourgeois elements into socialism" [3]). This discipline is co-ordinated by the party itself, which brings us to the whole point of What Is To Be Done? Since the proletariat cannot arrive at an adequate socialist consciousness by its own efforts, it requires the aid of a political party, and more specifically a vanguard party of professional revolutionaries. The emphasis on professionalism is important, for What Is To Be Done? is not merely a model for a vanguard, as it is so often depicted; it is also an insistent call for an end to amateurism in the socialist movement. Thus:

It is particularly necessary to arouse in all who participate in practical work, or are preparing to undertake that work, discontent with the amateurism prevailing among us and an unshakeable determination to rid ourselves of it. [4]

One is reminded here, of course, of Marx's depiction of communist society, and the image of the polyvalent personality that emerges so strongly in his early writings: human beings as hunters, fishers, herders and critical critics. For the path by which Lenin proposes to get there entails exactly the opposite sort of personality: monovalent rather than polyvalent. A recurring Yeatsian image surfaces here:

Hearts with one purpose alone
Through summer and winter seem

Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living stream. [5]

The point being, of course, that Lenin's image of the professional revolutionary is one that is terribly discordant with the lived reality of the proletarian. In consequence of this, the only manner in which ordinary workers can become involved in party work is through the adoption of multiple identities: during the time that workers do organisational work, they shed their identities as workers, and assume the identities of intellectuals; and they can never assume the tasks of senior party functionaries without shedding their proletarian identities altogether. Lenin is, of course, perfectly happy with this conclusion; but it raises large questions about the relationship between means and ends, some of which were taken up in the discussion of Luxemburg's critique of Lenin.

How does this particular treatment of politics fit into Lenin's project as a whole? The standard interpretation is that the model set out in What Is To Be Done? is the definitive account, to which Lenin remains committed. Certainly it is the model current among almost all contemporary Leninists; and certainly, there is plenty of textual support for it. Indeed, in his various responses to the split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, Lenin is inclined to strengthen this model of party organisation, arguing for centralised party decision-making ("democratic centralism"), an argument which of course invited a strong response from Luxemburg. ✓

But this is not the whole story. In the first place, Lenin is far from clear on whether this model is intended for application in the capitalist democracies. Certainly, he expresses at various times deep unhappiness about the participation of democratic socialist parties in capitalist parliamentary processes; but he remains ambiguous on this score to the end of his life, and in this period he is unequivocally clear that the model of What Is To Be Done? is intended to deal with the problems that a socialist movement faces in an autocracy.

Even more importantly, however, there is the whole problem of whether this particular model of class consciousness -- namely, consciousness as external to activity -- can be extracted with any coherence from Lenin's overall project. For, once again, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that Lenin works at other times with a model that approximates fairly closely to Marx's original conception. The most well-known example of this is, of course, his enthusiasm for opening up the party to the masses after the 1905 Revolution; but the theme runs through his work consistently if one is prepared to look for it. As early as the Draft and Explanation of a Programme for the Social Democratic Party, composed in late 1895 or early 1896, for example, he maintained that

Every strike concentrates all the attention and all the efforts of the workers on some particular aspect of the conditions under which the working class lives. Every strike gives rise to discuss about these conditions, helps the workers to appraise them, to understand what capitalist

oppression consists of in the particular case, and what means can be employed to combat this oppression. Every strike enriches the experience of the entire working class. [6]

and

Thus the struggle of the factory workers against the employers inevitably turns into a struggle against the entire capitalist class, against the entire social order based on the exploitation of labour by capital. [7]

and again:

The class consciousness of the workers means the workers' understanding that to achieve their aims they have to work to influence affairs of state, just as the landlords and the capitalists did, and are continuing to do now.

By what means do the workers reach an understanding of all this? They do so by constantly gaining experience from the very struggle that they begin to wage against the employers and that increasingly develops, becomes sharper, and involves larger number of workers as big factories grow. [8]

Here is a position that is a far cry from the lofty disdain for "economism" and "spontaneism" that marks What Is To Be Done? Lenin's argument here is entirely consistent with Marx's image of the class struggle growing, through self-educative activity and without the need for political tutelage, from the level of the factory floor to a bid for state power.

One might object, of course, that these arguments antedate the "mature" vision of What Is To Be Done? But such an interpretation does not square with arguments that postdate 1902. Thus, Lenin could write after the 1905 Revolution:

while society is based on the oppression and exploitation of millions of working people, only the few can learn directly

from that experience. The masses have to learn mostly from their own experience, paying dearly for every lesson. The lesson of 9 January was a hard one, but it revolutionised the temper of the entire proletariat of the whole of Russia. [9]

and again:

We must remember what a tremendous educational and organising power the revolution has, when mighty historical events force the man in the street out of his remote corner, garret or basement and make a citizen out of him. Months of revolution sometimes educate citizens more quickly and fully than decades of political stagnation. [10]

and again, after the October Revolution, in a passage that is powerfully reminiscent of Luxemburg:

we do not expect the proletariat to mature for power in an atmosphere of cajoling and persuasion, in a school of mealy sermons or didactic declamations, but in the school of life and struggle ... The proletariat must do its learning in the struggle, and stubborn, desperate struggle in earnest is the only teacher. [11]

At this point the ambiguity in Lenin's treatment of the problem of class consciousness should be clear: he adopts each of these positions at different times, rendering the "orthodox" model of What Is To Be Done?, so cherished by contemporary Leninists, problematic at best and untenable at worst.

How can this ambiguity be explained? A plausible account has been offered by Neil Harding, who argues that

Lenin clearly distinguished between the way in which the Social-Democratic intelligentsia came to consciousness and the generation of consciousness in the mass. For the mass the road to consciousness was not and could not be through reflection, study and extrapolation. Consciousness was rather imparted sensuously. It was felt in the solidarity and strength communicated to the individual in a mass demonstration or strike. It was communicated empirically,

experimentally, through immediate observation of phenomena which the mass encountered and confronted: 'enlightenment is not obtained from books alone, and not so much from books even as from the very progress of the revolution, which opens the eyes of the people and gives them a political schooling.' 'Experience in the struggle enlightens more rapidly and more profoundly than years of propaganda under other circumstances.' [12]

Certainly this would account for Lenin's ability to hold to these two particular positions -- the self-education of the mass and the didactic education of the intelligentsia -- simultaneously. But it does not account for Lenin's position in What Is To Be Done?, in which he proposes the didactic education of the masses in unequivocal terms. If Harding's account is to stand, it must argue that Lenin somehow repudiates the position in What Is To Be Done?; and while there is plenty of evidence that Lenin was in later years unhappy both with the polemic and the uses to which it was put, there is no clear evidence to suggest that he repudiated it. A more plausible explanation, I would suggest, is simply that Lenin is hopelessly ensnared in what Benton has called the "paradox of emancipation":

Since the political values of the radical[s] ... are, generally speaking, egalitarian, democratic and/or libertarian, they are caught in a paradox: if they are to remain true to their political values they may implement no changes without the consent of those who are affected by them, and if they seek to implement no such changes, then they acquiesce in the persistence of a social system radically at odds with their political values.... For Marxists, the attempt to combine a recognition of the domination of the consciousness of the subordinate classes by the ideas of the dominant class with a democratic practice of socialist struggle has always been a central strategic problem. [13]

Oscillating between the two poles of the paradox, he cannot avoid contradicting himself: a trap which not a few political

theorists have found themselves in. If this line of reasoning is correct, then it also accounts in some measure for the considerable difficulties that Lenin had with the concept of the state, the issue to which I now turn.

5.4 Politics and the State

In the orthodox Marxist account -- and in this instance at least Lenin is a follower of orthodoxy -- revolutionary politics is an activity which aims at its own abolition. There are thus two logical cases to consider: politics before the transition to socialism, and politics during the transition itself. Since politics falls away after the transition to socialism, I shall not consider it here, except to repeat what I suggested in 3.8, that this is an implausible image of socialist society. Politics before the transition I have already discussed. I turn therefore to politics in the transition itself.

The immediate issue here is the notion of the state, and I shall approach Lenin's work in two ways. In 5.4.1 I consider the theoretical argument that he outlines in The State and Revolution. In 5.4.2 I discuss (some of) Lenin's practices with respect to the infant Soviet state.

5.4.1 The State and Revolution

It is no accident that Lenin chose to write The State and

Revolution on the eve of the Bolshevik revolution. As Neil Harding has convincingly argued, Lenin was the most doctrinaire of revolutionaries, concerned at every point to extract practice from theory rather than to torture theory into the form dictated by practice. Until this point is grasped, much of Lenin's work remains a puzzle. Thus Polan confesses his bemusement:

It has proven difficult to explain precisely why Lenin chose the moment of temporary lull in the storms of 1917 to write the book in his enforced Finland exile. [14]

Once the relationship between Lenin's theory and Lenin's practice is appreciated, this "difficulty" falls away: Lenin wrote it as an exercise in clarification prior to the launching of the November Revolution. It is thus no "occasional" text, but the political keystone in Lenin's theory after 1916.

The argument can be simply put as follows:

1. The state is an instrument for the oppression of one class by another. With the advent of socialism, the state must be smashed utterly and completely.
2. During the transition to socialism, however, some sort of state form will be needed, if only to suppress reactionary elements, and to regulate the transitional economy.
3. This transitional state is the "dictatorship of the proletariat". Its political form is the soviet, or council, which abolishes the separation between the rulers and the ruled.
4. From its very inception this state form begins to wither away; indeed, in Miliband's memorable words, "the state, on the morrow of the revolution, has not only begun to wither away, but is already at an advanced stage of decomposition [15]

The key to the text is point 4. After extensively discussing

Marx and Engels on the character of the state, Lenin concedes that, since for the founders of Marxism the defining characteristic of the state was its deployment of oppressive armed force, in the absence of any separate repressive agencies there can properly speaking be no state. This is of course exactly the image of the "transitional state" he has in mind. He then goes on to reaffirm that he is talking about a state of some sort, but "an emergent, new state" that "is no longer a state in the proper sense of the term." [16] So, on the one hand, Lenin adheres to Marx's Commune model, in which the state is immediately abolished; on the other hand, he holds to the "dictatorship of the proletariat" model, in which the state is not abolished but persists. The only way in which he can reconcile these two contradictory positions is to argue that the state immediately begins to wither away; thus it simultaneously is and is not a state. As Harding argues,

He tried diligently to solve the conundrum, which Engels bequeathed, of reconciling and identifying the commune and the dictatorship of the proletariat. That the effort merely sowed confusion through State and Revolution should not surprise us. [17]

It might be added that the confusion extends far beyond The State and Revolution. Polan also displays a severe dose of it:

The subject of my argument will be Lenin, not Marx. Such a substitution might ordinarily evoke a protest from those who consider that Leninism is but one of the many possible versions of Marxism, and in itself not the most legitimate. But in the area I shall be discussing such a protest is perhaps weaker than it might otherwise be. For Marx endowed posterity with no other theory of the politics and government of socialist society than the commune-state; and Lenin incorporated into his politics the theory of the commune-state as elaborated by Marx, without additions and

without omissions. Here, at least, there seems to be a process, not of revision or development, but of straightforward inheritance. [18]

Now, the confusion has profound implications for the notion of politics in this transitional period. For we have a state that both is and is not; and we would thus expect to find a politics that both is and is not. Dissecting The State and Revolution, this is indeed the case. Miliband -- who also detects Lenin's confusion of conflicting accounts of the state -- has provided perhaps the most trenchant critique of this semi-politics. On the one hand, the abolition of the state must lead to the abolition of parties as well. On the other hand, the survival of the state indicates also the survival of political parties. It is at this point that Engels's conflation begins to produce not just confusion but havoc. Lenin's treatment of this particular problem was to choose (perhaps not consciously) the solution that most favoured the Bolsheviks: all parties save one are abolished. And the remaining party stands in a highly ambiguous relationship to the state. Miliband points out that there are three references to the party in The State and Revolution, only one of which is of direct relevance to this issue. The relevant passage, quoted by Miliband, reads thus:

By educating the workers' party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat, capable of assuming power and leading the whole people to socialism, of directing and organizing the new system, of being the teacher, the guide, the leader of all the working and exploited people in organizing their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie. [19]

The ambiguity is twofold. On the one hand, it is simply not

clear whether it is the party or the proletariat which does all these admirable things. On the other hand, if it is the party, in exactly what relationship does it stand to the proletariat? The ambiguity is unproblematic only on the assumption that the party and the class are essentially one and the same. But they were not, nor could they ever be. It will be recalled that Kautsky makes almost the same criticism in arguing that a class can rule but not govern, and therefore a plurality of political parties is absolutely indispensable for the political mediation of the revolution. Lenin, hopelessly ensnared in the confusion of The State and Revolution, insisted angrily that a class could govern; but in that case there is no need for a party at all. Furthermore, as Miliband points out, he seems to have abandoned rather quickly the notion that a class can govern ; in 1921, against the criticisms of the Workers' Opposition, he insisted that "the dictatorship of the proletariat is impossible except through the Communist Party". [20] Here confusion in theory begins to spill over into confusion in practice, and it is to this that I now turn.

5.4.2 From Confused Theory to Confused Practice

The story is a sorry one, and is quickly told. The Bolshevik Revolution was forged on the assumption that capitalism had become a rotten, degenerate force, and that the quicker Russia pressed on to a communist revolution -- bypassing the stage of fully-fledged capitalism -- the better. In this "permanentist" strategy, the proletariat was still the central driving force

but, as we have seen, it stood in a highly ambiguous relationship to the political party. When the proletariat begins to disappear as a cohesive class, then the entire status of Marxism in this project comes into question. As the civil war and economic collapse took their toll, the first to go was the "commune" dimension of the soviet state; the workers were simply not capable as a class of governing. The soviet state thus leaned towards being a "dictatorship of the proletariat", although its proletarian component was essentially the vanguard that was comparatively resistant to these pressures. As conditions worsened, so even this vanguard became inadequate to its tasks:

Are we so childish as to think that we can complete the process so quickly at this time of dire distress and impoverishment, in a country with a mass of peasants, with workers in a minority, and a proletarian vanguard bleeding and in a state of prostration? [21]

Lenin seems quite unaware here that he is echoing Kautsky. Indeed, there is a grotesque sense in which he remorselessly fulfils the predictions in Kautsky's critique. Once the proletariat had been shattered, Lenin was

reduced to the bizarre position of arguing that, if the Party had to govern without proletarian support, so much the worse for the proletariat. Part of his rationalisation for this situation was to argue the even more extraordinary thesis that the proletariat had quite ceased to exist in Russia and, therefore, the dictatorship of the proletariat would have to be exercised without it. [22]

As Harding remarks, "this was, quite clearly, a moment of critical importance in the disintegration of Lenin's structure of thought." [23] Once the class to which the bureaucracy was

ostensibly accountable had disappeared, the resulting "dictatorship of the proletariat without the proletariat" became a bureaucratic nightmare. Lenin clearly saw this in the last months of his life, and cast around for a formula which would restore some accountability to the state apparatuses. Unfortunately, given the absence of a suitable class, he could think only of another bureaucracy:

In this situation the only body which could hope to oversee and bring to account the Party/state bureaucracy, was a special Party/state apparatus composed of the most exemplary and dedicated workers and endowed with superordinate powers. Lenin's solution to the threat of administrative irresponsibility was to create another administrative body. [24]

Quis custodiet ipsos custodes? The problem was insuperable, and Lenin died shortly thereafter, a deeply troubled man, agonisingly aware of the problem but entirely incapable of solving it within his existing theoretical framework.

That Lenin was deeply implicated in the disastrous failure of the Soviet experiment seems undeniable. Assigning specific culpability is impossible and probably pointless; it is of considerably more interest to notice the structure of this culpability. Lenin was primarily a theoretician who sought theoretical guidance for practically everything he did. As the theory went off the rails, so too did the practice. At the end of this review, it seems fair to say that Leninism is Marxist theory gone dramatically wrong: on the fundamental issues in Marxist politics -- the theories of history, of proletarian organisation, and the state -- it is either confused or

ambiguous. I suggest, therefore, that the insurrectionary road to socialism -- if it is at all plausible, which (as I argued in chapter 3) is doubtful -- must draw on other theoretical foundations. ✓

5.5 Gramsci and the Ideological Road to Socialism

Gramsci's work, more than that of any of Marx's other major inheritors, is dramatically incomplete. In Kiernan's deft phrase, it remains "a confusion of half-cut masonry and columns never reared." [25] This incompleteness poses major problems of interpretation, and it is aggravated by other circumstances. The work is written under appalling conditions; much of it is encoded in a cryptic language designed to decoy the prison censor; Gramsci had little access to Marx's text, and seems to have worked mainly from memory; and he was no economist, hence the key arguments of Capital are scarcely engaged. We should therefore approach his work cautiously. It is shot through with ambiguities, indeed with antinomies. Furthermore, the work remains very much the product of an Italian, indeed a Sardinian, reflecting on the Italian experience. The concept of "hegemony" -- the major construct around which the work is organised -- is derived from an empirical study of Italian history. The extent to which it can be torn loose from these moorings and transplanted elsewhere is questionable, and the extent to which it can be applied without empirical support is even more questionable. In the following remarks, therefore, I aim only to extract a general sense of Gramsci's argument, glossing over

major ambiguities or complexities of interpretation.

A good place to begin this review is with the 1859 Preface. This was a text Gramsci knew well, and he returned to it again and again. In a sense, it provides us with the kernel of his theory of ideology. Now, in the systems equilibrium/disequilibrium model that Marx outlines here, it is not clear exactly what role the class struggle plays in the transformation of modes of production. It may be that Marx, acting on a bias of anticipated censorship, simply glossed over the issue. [26] At the same time, the problem is not simply left out; it is inserted into the main argument, but in an ambiguous way, most centrally in the following lines:

In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic -- in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. [27]

And this consciousness, in turn, derives from social being, rather than social being deriving from consciousness. These formulae can be interpreted in many different ways. On the one hand, one can insist that the derivative nature of consciousness makes the requisite content of ideology an automatic product of the conflicts in the economic foundations. Human agents on this reading are essentially Trager. On the other hand, one can argue that the first reading is so comprehensively mechanist and passive that politics is reduced to a meaningless category, and

the task of the socialist movement is simply to cheer as the train of history drives us to our destiny. A third -- and grotesque -- reading would be to accept the determined nature of politics but believe that one's own (superficially willed) engagement in it is simply a manifestation of that determination. While this line of reasoning is on the face of it plausible, the cognitive gymnastics involved in it would make it palatable only to the most incorrigible of structuralists.

Gramsci's reading is essentially the second of these: class struggle is central to the socialist project, and this class struggle operates primarily on the plane of ideas, be they legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic. Now, the importance of this ideological plane will depend to a large degree on political context, and here Gramsci draws a crucial distinction between politics in western Europe and politics in Tsarist Russia. This in turn leads us to the relationship between Gramsci and Lenin. Lenin's treatment of the state regards it as a product of irreconcilable class conflict, consisting primarily of coercive apparatuses; in "special bodies of armed men who have prisons, etc, at their command." [28] Since this state cannot be "captured", it must be destroyed by frontal assault: by armed insurrection. There is of course a very large question mark over whether the Bolsheviks actually succeeded in smashing the state or not; but if they did, they could only have done so because of the sort of state they were dealing with. The state, Gramsci insists, is not necessarily a merely coercive structure. It can take other forms, and here the

distinction between east and west is developed:

In Russia the state was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relationship between state and civil society, and when the state trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The state was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks. [29]

This military metaphor of fortresses, earthworks and bastions is one that Gramsci returns to repeatedly, and it raises the question of the relationship between state and civil society in his thought.

5.5.1 The State and Civil Society

The notions of "civil society" and "the state" have been at the very heart of western political philosophy since the rise of modern capitalism; they correspond, very roughly, to the notions of the "private" and the "public", and it is with the peculiarly private sphere of society that Gramsci is most concerned. The line of separation is not, however, always clear. On Gramsci's "minimalist" definition of the state, they are distinctly separate: "two major superstructural levels". On the "maximalist" definition, by contrast, civil society is subsumed in the state, producing an "expanded definition": state = civil society + political society, or -- most memorably -- the state is "hegemony fortified by the armour of coercion". [30] Despite these ambiguities, Gramsci is conscious of the need to distinguish civil society from the state, and the formula "state

= civil society + political society" is a loose one, intended as the basis for the general theory of hegemony. On this account, and contra Lenin, direct coercion does not explain the stability of the capitalist democracies, and neither Leninist theory nor Leninist practice are adequate to this context. One must rather seek to explain political stability in terms of the "dominant ideology", and the manner in which it is internalised and actively lived by subaltern groups. The key concept here is of course "ideological hegemony".

5.5.2 The Concept of Hegemony

The notion of "hegemony", more than anything else in Gramsci, has been the object of intense interest. It has been deconstructed, reconstructed, scrutinised and dissected at length; and it has been put to work in all sorts of contexts. I undertake no complex dissection here. Simply put, the concept refers to the entire system of beliefs, values, attitudes, morals, and so on which act as organising principles or world views. Perhaps the best summary of the concept -- despite his later reservations -- is provided by Gwyn Williams:

Hegemony indicates a socio-political moment, in his [Gramsci's] terminology a 'moment', in which the philosophy and practice of a society fuse or are in equilibrium; an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout civil society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotation. An element of direction and control, not necessarily conscious, is implied. [31]

The concept corresponds roughly to the notion of "ideology" as a belief system which organises, rationalises and perpetuates oppression. That is, Gramsci is concerned here precisely with the processes of legitimation.

In the last sense, the notion of hegemony connects strongly to a particular concept of power. What it denies is that power is to be found in a distinct locus or set of loci. At a first impression, it appears to correspond to a notion of multiple sovereignty; but on closer inspection, the theory is actually a theory of nonsovereignty. Power does not reside in specific nodes, but is diffused throughout civil society; in Perry Anderson's memorable phrase, it is "the invisible colour of everyday life". Under these circumstances neither the violence of the minority nor the numerical superiority of the majority will displace it. The numerical superiority of the majority, in a sense, is ideological hegemony. Power is thus organic rather than nodal.

This is not simply a theory of consent. More accurately, it is a theory of directed consent. A specific stratum of people -- the fraction that Gramsci terms "intellectuals" -- organises and disseminates consent. It is for precisely this reason that we cannot, properly speaking, speak of "pure spontaneous action". What appears as spontaneity is in reality a process in which leadership has left no reliable track of itself. Spontaneity is simply multiple elements or levels of conscious leadership

articulated by intellectuals. Of course, one will immediately want to question the empirical usefulness of this formulation. If no reliable track of leadership has been left, how can we know -- other than at the level of theory -- that a process was not spontaneous? Perhaps part of the answer to this conundrum is given in Gramsci's argument that all human agents are, in a sense, intellectuals. What Gramsci suggests here is that, although we can speak of intellectuals, we cannot speak of non-intellectuals. There is no human activity, however menial and mindless, from which intellectual activity is absent. Rather, there are varying degrees of specific intellectual activity, and it is those intellectuals whose engagement with mental processes is the central part of their lives who disseminate, organise and mobilise consent. The problem of accounting for spontaneity thus disappears, to some extent at least; it is possible in principle to trace the ideological processes at work in any spontaneous action to a source in the intellectual stratum.

5.5.3 Hegemony and Consciousness

Let us recall for the moment Lenin's depiction of consciousness in What Is To Be Done? The account of ideology there is essentially a binary account, in the sense that all consciousness is either true consciousness or false consciousness; in Lenin's terms, bourgeois consciousness or socialist consciousness. Gramsci rejects this account. Consciousness, he argues, is a much more subtle and nuanced state of mind; it includes Stone Age elements as well as modern technocratic components, and its

development entails sorting out the good part of common sense from the bad part, so to speak. Thus he distinguishes between at least three levels in the development of a political class consciousness.

The first level, the most primitive, involves a feeling of solidarity among the members of a category but simultaneous hostility towards the members of another category. An example would be solidarity among truck drivers but hostility to coal miners. The second level involves solidarity among all members of a class, but in purely economic terms. Here the state enters the equation, but only in terms of winning juridico-political equality with the ruling group. The third level of consciousness is attained when a social class perceives its role in terms of establishing its hegemony in society, and it is at this point that consciousness may properly be said to be political. This in turn brings us to the central significance of the concept of hegemony.

At one level, hegemony is a system of ideas that legitimates oppression. But it is not, of course, only that. Gramsci's sociology of capitalist society, governed as it is by the "philosophy of praxis", is simultaneously a means of explanation and of transformation: knowledge is constructed in the name of freedom. Hegemony is thus a dual-edged weapon, a strategy of struggle as well as a strategy of control. That is, the political struggle is not prosecuted merely at the level of state

power or the factory floor, but on the intellectual and moral fronts as well: in short, in all spheres of human activity. This dramatically broadens the definition of what is to count as political, and opens up a wide range of potential struggles that are theoretically excluded from Lenin's political strategy.

The crucial idea here is that the socialist project entails the construction of an alternative hegemony, a parallel world view cast in opposition to the world view of the dominant classes. In effect, political strategy must aim at entering and inhabiting civil society at every point, establishing an entire alternative system of power and culture within it. The theoretical possibility of this strategy is given in the concept of power: since power is organic rather than nodal, the organs of state power are not the primary concern of socialists. The construction of an alternative hegemony runs hand in hand with the deconstruction of bourgeois hegemony, a process of demystification and delegitimation. What is absolutely crucial here is the notion of the political party, and it is to this I now turn.

5.5.4 Hegemony and the Party

There are four key themes here. These are, first, the "dual perspective" of the party, second, the relationship between the party and the intellectuals, third, the relationship between the party and the proletariat, and fourth, the relationship between the party and other classes.

5.5.5 The "Dual Perspective"

When Gramsci speaks of the "dual perspective" of the party, he is referring to two theoretical levels, which a party adequate to its tasks must be able to assess at any given moment. These two theoretical perspectives correspond to what he calls the "war of position" and the "war of manoeuvre". The latter is an extremely fluid revolutionary situation, somewhat akin to the early phase of the Russian Revolution or to the near-revolution in Europe between 1918 and 1922. The former, by contrast, is rather like a war of attrition, prosecuted in time of comparative stability; it is in this phase that the ideological battle for hegemony proceeds. The party thus operates on these theoretical levels as circumstances demand: the levels of "force and consent, of authority and hegemony, of the individual moment and the universal moment, of agitation and propaganda, of tactics and of strategy" [33] -- in a word, the levels of the "organic" and the "conjunctural".

5.5.6 The Intellectuals

What is crucial to the war of position is the stratum of intellectuals. Here Gramsci speaks of two distinct kinds of intellectuals, which he terms "traditional" and "organic". Traditional intellectuals are associated with transient classes or with the remnants of previous modes of production; the role of the Catholic Church in Italian history is of crucial significance in developing this category. Organic intellectuals, by contrast,

arise directly out of one of the great classes, and they direct attempts at thematising a hegemony. They are, so to speak, organic to the class in question. It is the organic intellectuals of the bourgeoisie -- the judges, the lawyers, the industrial technocrats, the bureaucrats, the academics and lawyers -- who play the key role in disseminating bourgeois hegemony. As Marx himself argued,

The individuals who comprise the ruling class possess among other things consciousness and thought. Insofar as they rule as a class and determine the extent of a historical epoch, it is self-evident that they do it in its entire range. Among other things they rule also as thinkers and producers of ideas and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age. Their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. [34]

Leaving aside the problem of adducing microfoundations for this argument, it follows that a key element in the process of demystifying bourgeois hegemony is to make a decisive impact on, or fracture in, this stratum of bourgeois intellectuals. This task in turn is linked precisely to the formation of a new stratum of organic intellectuals:

One of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer 'ideologically' the traditional intellectuals, but this assimilation and conquest is made quicker and more efficacious the more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectuals. [35]

When such a fracture can be precipitated it not only disorganises the hegemony of the bourgeoisie but also enlists some of their former intellectuals in the construction of an alternative hegemony. The argument is of course reminiscent of the passage

in the Communist Manifesto, where Marx and Engels argue that as the class struggle intensifies, so

a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands ... a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole. [36]

This is not, however, the heart of the matter. Much more important is the development of a stratum of intellectuals organic to the proletariat itself, a stratum who arise within the proletariat and direct the thematisation of its alternative hegemony. In Gramsci's words,

the creation of elites of intellectuals of a new type which arise directly out of the masses, but remain in contact with them to become, as it were, the whalebone of the corset ... is what really modifies the 'ideological panorama' of the age. [37]

This fraction, more than defectors from the bourgeoisie, plays the crucial role in the transformation of the ruling ideology.

5.5.7 Party and Class

In some respects, Gramsci's arguments here closely resemble the kinds of arguments that Lenin made in What Is To Be Done? He argues, for example, that the construction of an alternative hegemony is essentially a process of education:

the party must never tire of repeating its own arguments (though offering literary variation of form); repetition is the best didactic means for working on the popular mentality

and the party must work incessantly to raise the intellectual level of ever-growing strata of the populace. [38]

In no sense, however, does he envisage a party organised on Leninist lines. Rather, the party is inclusive but hierarchical, organised around three key elements. These are, first, a mass element, composed of ordinary, average people, whose participation takes the form of discipline and loyalty, rather than any creative spirit or organisational ability. Second, there is the principal cohesive element, which centralises the movement nationally and dynamises a complex of forces which, left to themselves, would count for nothing. This element is endowed with considerable capacities for discipline and centralisation, but much more importantly with the capacity for innovation. Third, there is an intermediate element, which articulates the first element with the third and maintains constant contact between the two, not only physically but also morally and intellectually.

The relations among these three strata are emancipatory in their very inception. Since what is ultimately aimed at is the abolition of authority relations, one cannot proceed on the basis of slavish obedience and blind subservience -- the "injection of consciousness". What is required, rather, is the application of reason to political activity: authority must be based not upon a passive and supine acceptance of orders, but on the conscious and lucid assimilation of the directive to be accomplished. Here is a position that is something akin to Luxemburg's, in the essentially mass character of the party, but also something akin

to Lenin's, in the significance of its leadership. The heart of the concept of hegemony is the notion of directed consent. There is a sense, therefore, in which this conception of the party captures both elements: the notion of direction, from the leadership, and consent, from the mass. In no sense does Gramsci believe that consciousness can be injected artificially or sketched at whim on the tabula rasa of the proletariat's collective mind. Consciousness is neither true nor false, as Lenin would have it, but "strangely composite", consisting as it does of ideological and cultural sedimentations from a wide variety of sources. Each of us, therefore, is his or her own philosopher:

each carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a philosopher, an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct and therefore contributes to sustain a particular conception of the world or to modify it, to bring into being new modes of thought. [39]

Here is an almost existentialist attribution of responsibility, from which it follows that the transformation of modes of thought is not accomplished by the extrinsic moulding of mind, but by an intrinsic process of reflection and thematisation.

5.5.7 Class Alliances

For the most part I have bypassed this issue in discussing both Marx and his inheritors. In connection with Gramsci, however, it is worth saying something about this matter, since there is a widespread belief that his work provides some sort of sanction

for "popular front" policies in which the interests of the proletariat are submerged, or deferred to a later moment, in the pursuit of more immediate goals -- "national liberation" being the one most frequently named. Now, it is perfectly true that Gramsci -- like most Marxists -- emphasises the need for the proletariat to enter into alliances with other classes. The whole point about these alliances, however, is that they entail the ideological hegemony of the proletariat over the other classes in the resulting bloc. What is involved here is diffusing the proletariat's hegemony within the alliance so formed, placing the proletariat in the position of unquestioned leadership. The issue is precisely class domination rather than class compromise. There is no sanction in Gramsci -- as far as I read his work -- for the proletariat to put off its class interests in the name of the immediacy of the moment.

5.6 Conclusion

Gramsci's work, I argued earlier, is at one level a rejoinder to Lenin. The sort of social and stataal structures that characterise western Europe are immune to Leninist strategies of frontal assault. Long before the revolution triumphs over coercion it will have broken itself on the hegemony of the dominant classes. A precondition for any such "war of manoeuvre", therefore, is the deconstruction of bourgeois hegemony, the melting of the ideological glue of society. In a distinctively Marxian metaphor, socialism is thus constituted, as

an alternative hegemony and an alternative system of culture and power, within bourgeois society. The old order is thus eaten away from within rather than stormed from without; the "war of manoeuvre" is what collapses the remaining shell. We do not know what this war of manoeuvre looks like, although it is plausible to combine Gramsci's war of position with several different kinds of strategy for the actual transfer of power. What is certain, in Gramsci's terms, is that none will succeed without the pre-requisite deconstruction and reconstruction of hegemony.

Gramsci's work is a set of brilliant and incomplete insights into the sociology of consent in bourgeois society and the way in which socialist strategy can be deployed on the ideological terrain. Of the four theorists I have discussed in these two chapters, I suggest that he is the most inventive and insightful. This is not to say that the problem is thereby solved. I shall argue in the following two chapters that the structural difficulties inherent in the notion of a class politics are of an extreme order, and the entire Marxian strategy of proletarian revolution must be very severely questioned. There are, however, some strands of hope; and I take these up -- including the possibilities of the terrain of ideology -- in chapter 8.

PART III

In Part II I attempted an elucidation of the Marxian theory of revolution. This theory is by no means unproblematic, but in its own terms it is reasonably coherent, particularly when its less plausible variants -- particularly that of Lenin -- are discarded. As a model of purposive class action, however, it must meet major challenges from both the theory of class and the theory of collective action. These two theories are, of course, intimately related to one another, but are nevertheless sufficiently distinct to consider separately. By their very nature they cannot be treated exhaustively in an essay of this length. Nevertheless, I think that it can be shown that the Marxian account is inadequate in both respects, and that when these deficiencies are considered together the classical theory of proletarian revolution must count as a failure. I argue this case in chapters 6 and 7. In chapter 8 I consider -- rather tentatively -- some of the alternative strategies which have emerged in recent years. While these do not as yet constitute an alternative to the classical account, some synthetic strategy might yet be extracted from the various attempts to rethink the classical theory. Such a strategy, I argue, would have to contain a much clearer account of politics than that of the traditional account.

CHAPTER SIX

THE FAILURE OF THE MARXIST THEORY (i):

THE PROBLEM OF CLASS

6.1 Introduction

If one thing can be said about class theory, it is that the theory is in a mess. In this chapter I propose neither to wade through the mess nor to clean it up. Instead, I shall limit the discussion to identifying and considering three key problems. These three are first, class structure, second, class consciousness, and third, class interests. These three moments in the theory of classes affect the Marxist account of revolution in crucial ways. In order to show this, I shall begin with two preliminary discussions. In 6.2 I provide a general account of Marx's theory of class. In 6.3 I consider the question, "why the proletariat?" -- that is, simply, what evidence leads Marx to ascribe to the proletariat the historical mission that he does. Thereafter I consider the three problems outlined in sequence. To some extent the separation that I make among them is artificial, for they impinge heavily on one another; this schema is for purposes of ordering the subject matter only, and does not correspond to clear-cut divisions in the theory itself. In several instances I shall postpone the substantive discussion of issues to chapter 7, where I focus more narrowly on the problem of collective action. I then conclude this section of the

argument with a general discussion of the relationship between classes and social conflict.

6.2 Marx's Account of Class

There is, of course, no core text here, and only -- notoriously -- a fragment of systematic exposition. The following summary is thus both synthetic and schematic.

1. Marx's model of of class is a tendentially dichotomic (or "polar") interest model, standing in clear opposition to a pluralistic account of class and status relations.
2. Evidence for a pure dichotomic version is, of course, to be found in the Communist Manifesto, where the two-class model is most clearly set out. On the other hand, the same text also provides evidence for a polar model. Marx and Engels unambiguously acknowledge class complexity in earlier ages:

In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations. [1]

3. Marx and Engels take it to be a distinctive feature of capitalist society that class relations are tendentially dichotomic:

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, how-

ever, this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. [2]

This passage is frequently taken as distinctive evidence of a pure dichotomic model in Marx and Engels. I shall argue in 6.4 that this is fundamentally a misinterpretation, and that there are better ways of interpreting this and other characterisations of Marx and Engels on the subject.

4. The adherence to a tendentially dichotomous model nowhere blinds Marx and Engels to class complexity. Thus in the famous fragment at the end of Capital III he states that

even here [England] the stratification of classes does not appear in its pure form. Middle and intermediate strata even here obliterate lines of demarcation everywhere (though incomparably less in rural districts than in the cities. [3]

However, he immediately goes on to add that "this is immaterial to our analysis":

We have seen that the continual tendency and law of development of the capitalist mode of production is more and more to divorce the means of production from labour, and more and more to concentrate the scattered means of production into large groups, thereby transforming labour into wage-labour and the means of production into capital. [4]

5. This of course leads to the central category in the analysis of classes in capitalist society, i.e. capital. Capital is exchange value that seeks a further accretion in value, and capitalism is a system of commodity production for exchange characterised by the dominance of this category. Its distinctive

feature is therefore the commodification of labour-power. Classes are to be defined in relation to these patterns of production.

6. Thus Marx argues that "it is always the direct relation between the owners of the conditions of production and the direct producers which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden foundation, of the entire social edifice." [5]

7. Classes are defined not in terms of the places they occupy in the process of production, but in terms of the relation in which they stand to this process. That is, classes are archetypically producers or appropriators of surplus value.

8. Differential access to the surplus product defines "classes in themselves" (although, as Elster notes, Marx's actual distinction is between "class" and "class for itself"; the term "class in itself" does not appear in his text. [6]) But classes are also defined politically; that is, a group of exploited or exploiting agents is not strictly speaking a candidate for the rubric "class" until it defines itself in political opposition to another class. This argument appears at numerous points in Marx's text, most memorably in The Eighteenth Brumaire:

the great mass of the French nation is formed by simple addition of homologous magnitudes, much as potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes. In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. In so

far as there is merely a local interconnection between these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond, and no political organisation among them, they do not form a class. They are consequently incapable of enforcing their class interests in their own name, whether through a parliament or through a convention. They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. [7]

A category does not count as a class unless it can represent itself and until it actually does represent itself. Marx understood the class structure of English society, and of capitalist society more generally, to be characterised by the self-representation of the bourgeoisie but not yet of the proletariat. His life's work was to contribute in one way or another (as Engels said at his graveside) to the self-representation of the proletariat. The obvious question thus raised is why, precisely, Marx regarded the proletariat in the special light he did; and it is to this question I now turn.

6.3 Why the Proletariat?

Marxism is, and is not, a theory of proletarian emancipation. That it is this is commonplace. That it is not is less obvious but in the end more important. Simply, Marxism is a theory of human emancipation. This is easily demonstrated by reflecting on the following hypothesis: if Marxism were a theory of explicitly proletarian emancipation, and if the proletariat could achieve its emancipation at the expense of the rest of society, such a strategy would be its obvious course of action. That is, if it could represent its (particular) interests as the interests of all humankind, and if it could secure its political and social

hegemony over society on this basis (as all previous dominant classes had done) then it would have secured its class interests.

This is, of course, exactly the opposite of what Marx argues. The proletariat, for Marx, is a class that can only liberate itself in the act of liberating all humanity; it is the first class in history whose interests are not particular but universal. Now, if the liberation of humanity were simply a necessary condition for its liberation, then humankind appears in the account as a sort of tiresome nuisance. And in Marx's account, of course, it is anything but that: rather, the liberation of the proletariat is a necessary condition for the liberation of all humanity. Indeed, so powerfully are the interests of the proletariat identified with humanity itself that it is a sufficient condition. Marx's grounds for identifying the proletariat as an agent of universal emancipation become, therefore, of crucial importance.

Perhaps the most useful synopsis of the different positions which Marx adopts at various stages of his work is given by Richard Hyman:

It is important to disentangle several distinct sources of Marx's identification of the working-class as an agent of revolution. First was the search for a 'universal class' to set in place of Hegel's bureaucracy, and the discovery of the proletariat as a class whose 'radical chains' entailed that its particular emancipation could be achieved only through a general social emancipation. Second was the anthropological conception of purposeful social labour as the defining characteristic of humanity, its 'species-being'; the proletariat's function was the embodiment of this human creativity. Third was the connection with the

'philosophy of practice': if consciousness and action combined dialectically with material reality to transform social existence, the labour process could be viewed as the elemental form of human praxis and proletariat revolution its crowning manifestation. The fourth reflected the labour theory of value: if labour was the foundation of social productivity, it seemed to follow that the working class was pivotal for social transformation. The final proposition was that of (relative) immiserisation: as the principal victims of capitalist 'progress' and capitalist crisis, workers would surely be driven to revolt, and would continue to revolt until they had eliminated the underlying causes of their misery. [8]

There is a sixth possibility which Hyman leaves out, because his purpose is to argue explicitly against it, or rather against André Gorz's reading of it. The possibility which Hyman rejects is of considerable interest, and I turn to it now. At the risk of coining a neologism, I shall refer to the argument at issue as the "empowerment thesis", to be contrasted to the classical "immiserisation thesis". Hyman writes:

Gorz's answer ... is that Marx envisaged the re-appearance of the artisan in the guise of the polytechnic worker in high-technology industry. This is surely a perverse reading of Marx. Perhaps a couple of aperçus within the rich and visionary complexity of the Grundrisse are open to this interpretation; but throughout the whole body of Marx's writings is a consistent and altogether contrary thesis, and one to which Gorz himself alludes. [9]

The contrary thesis, of course, is contained in a set of celebrated propositions about capitalism: that capitalism produces alienation, progressively diminishing wages, longer working hours, greater unemployment, a lower rate of profit, and so on, and the ensuing misery drives the proletariat into revolt. Now, it is perfectly true that this argument is deeply embedded in Marx's analysis of capitalism and revolution; but in response to this, there are two points to be made. The first is that,

even if this is the case Marx took most seriously, it doesn't follow that it is a particularly good case; indeed, as I have tried to suggest, it is in many ways a bad sociology of revolution. The second point is that Gorz's reading is "perverse" only if one assumes an internal consistency in Marx's writings, a consistency which is largely absent. The fact that Gorz's reading contradicts other, clearly demonstrable, readings of Marx does not necessarily invalidate it; and I shall argue that it is not nearly so "perverse" as Hyman suggests.

In Marx's writings there are three plausible accounts of the internal dynamics of capitalism. The first account (that of the Communist Manifesto) is that capitalism is dynamised by class struggle. The second (that of the 1859 Preface) is that it is driven by the conflict between forces and relations of production. The third (that of much of Marx's historical writing) is that the dynamics of capitalism are to be found in the imperatives of technical change.

Now, the second and third accounts are not identical. In the second account -- following the central propositions of the 1859 Preface -- capitalism enters its final stages when the relations of production act as "fetters" on the forces of production, provoking crises of dysfunction, and smothering those forces. In the third account, almost the opposite applies: the final stages of capitalism are marked by an efflorescence of technical change and innovation. The second and third accounts can be combined

only on the assumption that in these final stages, communism would be a more efficient shell for the development of the productive forces. But this proposition is seriously flawed; it is functionalist, it is untestable, it lacks microfoundations for explaining collective action, and it is in any case implausible.

[10] To do the least damage to Marx's argument, we need to keep these two accounts separate. Now, on Marx's logic, capitalists in the third version of the breakdown of capitalism face what is essentially a prisoner's dilemma: innovation by all leads to a fall in the rate of profit, which is collectively irrational; but innovation by one alone promises considerable reward, and is therefore individually rational. But, in this version, the resultant fall in the rate of profit does not necessarily lead to absolute deprivation of the proletariat; it can simply lead to relative deprivation, which is -- on numerous accounts of revolution -- a more powerful motivator than absolute misery.

Assuming a scenario in which the rate of profit falls in consequence of massive technical innovation but the mass of profit rises -- and the wages of the proletariat rise simultaneously, though proportionally less than the profit accruing to the capitalists -- Gorz's scenario becomes less implausible than Hyman suggests. In this scenario the proletariat becomes more and more a "specialist class", in exactly the way that Gorz suggests. There is much more textual support for this case than Hyman allows. Hyman suggests that Gorz's only evidence is drawn from the Grundrisse: "capital ... reduces human labour, expenditure of energy, to a minimum, but only in order to realise a maximum of labour in the maximum

number of such objects. This will redound to the benefit of emancipated labour, and is the condition of its emancipation." [11] Hyman then suggests that this benefit only arises "after the abolition of capitalist production relations" [12] But this reading is palpably absurd, since a condition for emancipation must logically precede emancipation itself, i.e. it must arise within capitalist relations of production, not after their abolition. There is, furthermore, the crucial argument in Capital III (which Hyman ignores) concerning the emergence of managers in capitalist society. [13] Marx makes it clear here that supervisory labour is productive labour, and that the various functionaries which emerge in the labour process are, on the face of it, workers. He then argues that the "double nature" of supervisory work in capitalism places some functionaries in the capitalist camp and some on the side of the workers. Drawing the dividing line is a problem that has plagued Marxian theories of class ever since, but Marx clearly thought the distinction important. As the division between capital and its functionaries grows, so finally "only the functionary remains and the capitalist disappears as superfluous from the capitalist mode of production." [14]. Seen in this light, Hyman's case against Gorz appears exceedingly weak.

Let us therefore admit Gorz's argument as a sixth possibility. Combining it with Hyman's propositions, we obtain the following possible grounds for identifying the proletariat as a revolutionary agent:

1. The proletariat as a universal class
2. The proletariat as the archetypal species-being
3. Labour as praxis and hence the basis for consciousness
4. The labour theory of value (exploitation as motivation)
5. Immiserisation thesis
6. Empowerment thesis

The first claim is an interest claim of great significance, connecting as it does with the universal/particular couple that is so much part of Enlightenment political philosophy. It does not, however, generate in itself any plausible account of revolution, and the context in which it is embedded -- the Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right -- is couched in a language of metaphysics rather than sociology. The fourth claim is likewise an interest claim -- the proletariat, in being exploited, have an interest in overcoming their exploitation -- but it is inadequate as an account of revolutionary motivation. As Elster argues, the labour-value calculations involved in identifying who are exploiters and who are not are highly problematic. [15] More plausible is the notion that injustice is a sufficient interest-motivation, but this involves either identifying in, or grafting onto, Marx's work a theory of justice. Propositions 2 and 3 are positional claims; they assert only that the proletariat's position in capitalist relations of production may lead to processes which in turn will propell the working class into collective action. Propositions 5 and 6, finally, are processual claims; they assert that certain processes specific to capitalism will lead to its revolutionary overthrow by the working class. Of these in turn, proposition 6 is by far the stronger. As for proposition 3, it

does not in itself suggest any specific process, but one can be extracted from Marx's writings. It asserts, simply, that the potential inherent in the proletariat can be worked up into a political force through a slow process of organisation and maturation. Propositions 3, 5 and 6 make up the heart of Marx's images of proletarian politics. Of them, 5 and 6 are so heavily determined by the dynamics of capitalist society as to be hardly any politics at all. That leaves proposition 3 and the possibilities it suggests. This account of politics, while not of course the only one in Marx, is perhaps the most plausible. It is this account that I outlined and discussed in 3.6. Let us therefore let this stand as the heart of Marx's views on the proletarian struggle, and proceed to a rather more abstract discussion of the possibilities and pitfalls in the notion of classes.

6.4 Class Structure

The issue here is not whether a "middle class" -- be it an "old middle class" or a "new middle class" -- has come to interpose between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. To show the existence of such a middle class does not in itself invalidate Marx's account of class; as Draper has persuasively argued, Marx is perfectly well aware of the growth of the "middle class" in capitalist society. [16] The issue, rather, is the coherence of classes themselves. There are several ways in which to approach this problem. One way is to take Elster's characterisation of classes as a starting point: class theory is designed to explain

collective action, and if we can show that such action tends to coalesce around other lines of cleavage, then a serious question mark is placed over the utility of class theory. I think that this case can indeed be made, but I shall postpone it to 6.7. Another way to pose the problem is to enquire into the criteria for class identification. Obviously, our picture of class structure will vary as our criteria vary. While this approach cannot be conclusive against any one class theory, it can certainly be persuasive. I therefore adopt this line of enquiry in the following discussion.

On any reading of Marx, there is no single criterion for the identification of classes. That is, even if one could reduce the economic dimension of his argument to a single criterion, there remains the problem of politics: classes are also identified politically. Now, the reason why Marx insists on the political identification of classes takes us right to the heart of his theory: classes are characterised teleologically. Thus, in the case of the proletarian revolution, the form of the future society conditions the content of the transition: a collective future is pre-given in a collectivist class consciousness. In the absence of this collectivist consciousness, therefore, the proletariat does not yet exist as a class: the class is defined in terms of its outcome. [17]

This schema may have made eminently good sense in the mid-nineteenth century, an era in which class conflict dominated over

all other forms of collective action, and in which the correlation between economics and politics was clear for all to see. With the complexification of industrial society, however, the simple politico-economic identification of classes loses much of its utility. We need more criteria than just these two. I want to consider two alternatives here: those of Poulantzas and Elster.

I shall not devote any great attention to Poulantzas. Simply put, he argues for three, rather than two, criteria: economic, political and ideological. More specifically, his criteria depend in the first case on the distinction between productive and unproductive labour, in the second between supervisory and non-supervisory labour, and in the third between mental and manual labour. His evaluation of these criteria is rigorous, i.e. the proletariat must qualify on all three counts: only productive, non-supervisory, manual labour is the hallmark of the working class. [18]

Now, this is still a teleological account, for his insistence on these criteria is linked precisely to the role of the working class in the attainment of socialism. Unfortunately, it has somewhat drastic consequences for the identification of the proletariat, which shrinks to pygmy size when thus purged, while the "new petty bourgeoisie" grows to monstrous proportions. Nor does it help Poulantzas's case much to argue that the proletariat of the advanced capitalist societies, being located in the underdeveloped periphery, is the world's largest rather than

smallest; as I shall argue in the conclusion, the development/underdevelopment thesis is perhaps the most deeply pessimistic of Marxist theories. Poulantzas becomes ensnared in these difficulties precisely because of his retention of Marx's teleological bias. [19]

Elster's account, by contrast, is non-teleological, although still explicitly linked to the theory of collective action. We can define class by reference to four possible criteria, he argues: property, exploitation, market behaviour and power. Neither property nor exploitation, he argues, is in itself an adequate criterion; property-ownership is a consequence of rather than a precondition for class membership, while exploitation generates a classification that is either too coarse-grained or too fine-grained. [20] Market behaviour is a rather better criterion when recast in terms of endowment-necessitated behaviour, but it does not account for class structure in non-market societies; here we need a notion of power as constitutive of class, cast in terms of a command hierarchy; and the same criterion is needed in the analysis of the modern firm. Combining these criteria, he argues,

allows us to propose a general definition of class, in terms of endowments and behaviour. The endowments include tangible property, intangible skills and more subtle cultural traits. The behaviours include working vs not working, selling vs buying labour-power, lending vs borrowing capital, renting vs hiring land, giving vs receiving commands in the management of corporate property. These enumerations are intended as exhaustive. A class is a group of people who by virtue of what they possess are compelled to engage in the same activities if they want to make the best use of their endowments. [21]

Now, the incorporation of power as a criterion for class in this endowment-necessitated model has very important consequences for our general picture of class structure. Simply put, it profoundly affects the nature of class interaction in industrial society. Comparing typical hierarchy structures in Marx's day and in the modern firm, we get two quite different pictures. These in turn connect closely with the formation of class consciousness, as I shall attempt to argue shortly. Our comparison looks like this:

Mid 19th Century

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capitalists
 |
workers
```

Late 20th Century

```
shareholders
 |
managers
 |
shop stewards
 |
workers
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In terms of the perception of interests (as opposed to a theory of objective interests) the primary determinant in the formation of consciousness is the immediacy of interaction. Workers are thus much more likely to form local rather than global consciousnesses, often entailing an essential misidentification of interests and a consequent misdirection of energy. I shall consider this issue further in 6.5. For now, I suggest a general principle of class structure in advanced capitalist society, deriving from this endowment-necessitated image of classes: classes are typically pluralistic, atypically dichotomic in behaviour. I do not argue that they are so in "reality", since

it seems pointless to separate "reality" and "behaviour", except in terms of a theory of "objective" and "subjective" classes. While Marx makes this distinction, it remains central to his conception of class that classes are what classes do. Nor do I argue that classes are either "really" pluralistic or "really" dichotomic. Again, such a distinction would be subject to the rejoinder above. Classes can behave as if the class structure were essentially dichotomic, and they have so behaved in modern times; the discussion of this "atypical" case I defer to 6.5. For the most part -- for reasons which I discuss in the same section, and elaborate considerably in chapter 7 -- classes in advanced capitalist society have behaved much as Weber argued they do: as if the class structure were radically fragmented and even decomposed. This argument is obviously not "proven" in what I have argued here; indeed, given the essentially contested status of the concept of class, I doubt that a rigorous "proof" is possible. Nevertheless, I think that this case can be persuasive, and I shall expand on it in what follows.

6.4 Class Consciousness

Class consciousness is the capacity of a class to overcome the free-rider problem. The definition is Elster's, [22] and it has a substantive quality that makes it considerably more attractive than other, vaguer, definitions. The nature and implications of the free-rider problem I spell out in chapter 7. For now, I concentrate on a set of issues that are preliminary to the later

discussion.

A distinction I wish to dismiss at once is that between "true consciousness" and "false consciousness". While the central notion at work here does have a certain utility, it is in terms of interests rather than consciousness. I shall argue in 6.5 that class interests may be misidentified, and again in chapter 7 that even the active identification of interests may not be sufficient to ensure that they are secured. In the former sense -- the misidentification of interests -- we may speak of a "false consciousness". More accurately, however, the notion has no standing in Marxist theory, since Marx argues that one's relationship to one's surroundings is one's consciousness, and it is pointless to describe it as either true or false.

The notion of class consciousness can be usefully unpacked, following Mann, into four elements: class identity, class opposition, class totality, and the conception of an alternative society (to be reached through struggle with the opponent). [23] For complex reasons, he argues, all four elements are almost never present, and on the rare occasions when they -- in "explosions of consciousness" -- they are quickly submerged back into a more stable state. An important part of this argument is drawn implicitly from the field of cognitive psychology -- a resource that was, needless to say, unavailable to Marx. Although Mann nowhere uses the term, much of his argument draws on the notion of cognitive dissonance and its implications for the nature of consciousness. The argument here works in two

ways. Negatively, it undermines the theory of alienation as a source of working class consciousness. Alienation sets up a psychic tension between what workers have and what they might have, in the sense of an alternative society. Typically, he argues -- as Elster does too -- workers resolve this psychic dissonance by reducing the salience of what is denied to them, as in Elster's metaphor of the fox and the sour grapes. [24]

Positively, it tends to set up a dualistic consciousness, in which the cognitive dissonance is repressed rather than resolved. In this dualistic consciousness the "surface" component is an apparent passivity, while the "deep" component is a repressed dissatisfaction that can explode incandescently into volatile activity. A crucial factor in the pacification of the working class, he argues, is the nature of industrial relations. Where a pure market model is allowed to operate -- as in the United States -- trade union activity will institutionalise working class behaviour and the positional interests of the unionists will militate against volatile industrial action. Where this pure market model is contaminated with extra-market behaviour, as in the French and Italian cases, working class consciousness tends to be more militant:

It seems evident that the more employers behave as true capitalists, the securer will they rest in their beds! It is in those countries where employers have been least willing and able to act within the narrowly capitalist frame of reference that the working class has come closest to achieving revolution (tsarist Russia, Wilhelmian Germany, contemporary France and Italy). It is also in the most capitalist countries (Britain and the United States) that the working class has become most reformist. [25]

Under these circumstances, a developed class consciousness embracing all four of Mann's elements is atypical. The best that can be hoped for is the "dualistic consciousness", and this, he argues, on the evidence of surveys, is not atypical. Now, the repressions inherent in this consciousness can explode into militant behaviour, although it is not often political behaviour. But to translate these explosions of consciousness into something further -- such as a concerted bid for state power -- is structurally blocked both by the nature of industrial relations in capitalist society and by the psychic processes at work here. In regard to the first impediment, he argues,

The contradictory role of the organisations creates an unstable yet possibly insoluble situation. This is dialectic without a synthesis: revolutionary consciousness and compromising institutions, each largely ignoring the presence of the other. [26]

In regard to the second, it is psychologically very difficult to sustain such unstable states of consciousness in the face of even temporary defeats. Defeat often proves to be psychologically unbearable, and the resulting "fox and the sour grapes" situation is resolved precisely by a turning away from political action and a return to passivity.

Mann's conclusions are highly pessimistic; seeing no solution in the "new working class" he concludes that "overall, it seems safer to expect intermediate forms of class relations rather than either revolution or near-harmony." [27] This, of course, is exactly the image of class relations that Parkin offers:

The neo-Weberian position advanced here is that the relation between classes is neither one of harmony and mutual benefit, nor of irresolvable and fatal contradiction. Rather, the relationship is one of mutual antagonism and permanent tension; that is, a condition of unrelieved distributive struggle that is not necessarily impossible to 'contain'. Class conflict may be without cease, but it is not inevitably fought to a conclusion. [28]

It is no accident that this account of class conflict connects precisely with the account of class structure given in 6.3. Some of the issues thus raised I take up again in 6.7.

6.6 Class Interests

There are two logics of collective action which may prevent classes from acting in their interests. The first logic militates against any collective action at all emerging; it is the individual free rider problem, and is sufficiently important and complex to merit a discussion of its own. I take it up in chapter 7. The second logic operates once collective actors have already emerged; it is the collective free rider problem, and it can cause collective agents to be free riders with respect to their long-term interests. This logic is of more immediate interest, and I consider it below. Before proceeding with this discussion, some attention must first be devoted to the problem of defining class interests.

Consider here the argument of Wood:

The proposition that the working class is potentially the revolutionary class is not some metaphysical abstraction but an extension of these materialist principles, suggesting that, given the centrality of production and exploitation in

human social life, and given the particular nature of production and exploitation in capitalist society, certain other propositions follow: 1) the working class is the social group with the most direct objective interest in bringing about the transition to socialism [29]

The implicit distinction between objective interests and subjective interests is a common theme in this sort of discourse. Since the working class has almost never revealed an attachment to its allegedly objective interests, the distinction is inescapable if one wants to maintain that it is a revolutionary class. Now, the notion of objective (or "real") interests has a long and interesting pedigree in political theory. I will not explore this history here, but it is worth noting the central problem in it: that if one develops a theory of objective interests and then finds that the alleged subject of these interests will have nothing to do with them, then two possibilities follow: either the subject is unaware of his or her "real" interests, or the theory is wrong. On some readings of the problem, it is impossible to show the superiority of one interpretation over the other. [30] That is, one needs some empirical basis for the identification of real interests. I argued in chapter 2 that Lukes's model of power contains precisely such an empirical basis. I suggested, furthermore, that Lukes's empirical basis can be expanded if one takes certain insights from cognitive psychology: cognitive dissonances can be interpreted as an internal tension between subjective interests and objective interests. Mann argues that such cognitive dissonances can indeed be uncovered by research: "from surveys we can easily perceive latent consciousness of class, which, in

certain situations, can explode. Hence it is not difficult to develop a theory of dual consciousness." [31] We might plausibly be able to argue from this that the working class does indeed have an objective interest in socialism -- although there is no hint of any empirical basis to Wood's argument, and one might uncharitably say that for precisely that reason it is a metaphysical abstraction. Even ignoring this objection, however, there is a much more serious problem, and that is that an objective interest does not automatically translate into political action. The impediment to such action that concerns me here is what I described above as the collective free rider problem. The argument at issue here has been most cogently put by Przeworski, and I shall summarise his line of reasoning in what follows.

Przeworski begins not from the proposition that workers have an objective interest in socialism, but from the closely related but crucially different proposition that workers have an interest in improving their material conditions. He argues that socialism would indeed lead to an improvement in conditions over what capitalism could have achieved in any given period; and it would, in addition, secure such further benefits as greater freedom for the working class. These last benefits, however, do not enter into his immediate argument. Assuming only material interest, he then argues that the transition to socialism must entail a temporary decline in workers' material conditions: transformation of the relations of production must be accompanied by an economic crisis. Przeworski rejects those visions of the

transition which hold that it will be accompanied by a consistent improvement in conditions; at minimum, assuming that the transition does not take place on a world-wide scale, it will be accompanied by a flight of capital. In spite of this, the long-term comparison with capitalism favours socialism, both relatively and absolutely. Even given that, however, the notion of class interest is acutely problematic. There are two possibilities here: either the interest of the workers is the continuous improvement in their conditions, in which case they will not be prepared to enter the valley of transition. Alternatively, the interest of the workers is simply the long-term improvement in conditions.

The latter is objectively a more plausible case but subjectively a less plausible one. But this "objective" interest does not guarantee the transition to socialism, for it does not necessarily solve the problem that the valley of transition presents: the class as a collective agent might very plausibly refuse to prosecute its long-term interests. It may prefer, for good material reasons that have nothing to do with the superiority of socialism over capitalism, to take a free ride with respect to its long-term interests. [32] This is not an implausible case. Indeed, it is so typical of collective action that it is almost the normal case, as I shall argue later in reflecting on the arguments of Bahro. It is crucial to note that this is not an instance of individual free-riding but of collective free riding. In the following chapter I suggest that

the individual free rider problem can be overcome in a wide variety of ways. But the collective free rider problem is less amenable to resolution; and the problem here can only be resolved if the working class can be persuaded to accept certain costs in the realisation of its long-term interests. Its failure to do so, Przeworski argues, issues in a class compromise, characteristic of democratic capitalist societies, that is remarkably stable and hence comparatively immune to revolutionary politics. I conclude from this that the identification of objective class interests, while empirically supportable, is insupportable as a prima facie case for the realisation of those interests.

6.7 Classes and Social Conflict

Class theory, in the hands of Marxists, claims an explanatory primacy over other models or theories of conflict. This explanatory primacy may operate in two ways: on the one hand, one might argue that the "real" conflict in society is one of class, and other conflicts -- ethnic, religious, racial and so on -- are illusory or epiphenomenal. On the other hand, one might argue that these other conflicts are real but that they serve to stabilise the class structure and hence are functional to class domination. The second form of explanation is one that Marx uses on occasion -- in the following chapter I shall show that he views the conflict between Irish and English proletarians in exactly this light -- but without microfoundations it is insupportable. This is not to argue that such microfoundations

cannot be adduced; in the South African case, for example, some Marxists -- sensitive to the need for empirical evidence -- have shown that some racial conflicts were intentionally precipitated by capitalists with precisely these functional goals in mind. Such attempts to produce evidence, however, are the exception rather than the rule; the epistemological primacy of class is typically considered sufficient here.

For the most part, this epistemological primacy is derived precisely from the teleological basis of Marx's account of class; this, and only this, explains the theoretical primacy of class conflict. I can think of no other explanation -- apart from metaphysics -- why class should be thought of as the "real" line of social cleavage. Examining the matter from the other side, if class theory is intended as an account of collective action, its epistemological primacy falls away. Collective action can and does coalesce around other lines of cleavage. Unless and until one can provide evidence that these cleavages are in some senses derivative of class conflict, there are no grounds for thinking of the one as logically prior to the other; as Elster puts it, "one could equally turn the argument around and say that class is the imperfect expression of the more fundamental cultural conflicts." [33] This separation of social conflicts -- coupled with the delegitimation of Marx's teleology of classes -- has vitally important implications for the analysis of various "new social movements" in capitalist society; again, I defer discussion of these implications to the concluding chapter.

There is one other way of asserting the primacy of class over other conflicts, and that is to concede that they have comparable significance but that class, in the last instance, will win out as the "real" line of conflict. In particular, it is argued, forms of racial or cultural conflict are only granted a space in which to play themselves out by the stability of capitalist society. When capitalist society enters once more into crisis, class will re-assert itself as the true line of conflict. While this argument is on the face of it plausible, it can be argued with empirical support that precisely the opposite is the case. Economic crisis may intensify the mobilisation of groups around non-class lines rather than diminish it. As Mann argues,

In almost all Western countries now, those who would be worst hit by recession are disproportionately drawn from distinct ethnic, religious or cultural sub-groups within the working class. Blacks in the United States, coloured immigrants, Celts and Catholics in the United Kingdom, southern Europeans in Northern Europe, southerners in Italy -- hardship among all these groups would not necessarily stir the working class as a whole into action. [34]

The power of cultural identity, however irrational Marxists may wish to imagine it (indeed, perhaps precisely for its irrationality) is immense. Against this, perhaps only a Gramscian strategy, predicated as it is precisely upon culture, can prevail. But the prospects are not good. Culture has an immediacy that the "deep" structure of class does not; just as the complexification of hierarchies in the firm tends to fragment class consciousness, so too does the rawness of racial confrontation tend to exacerbate the appeal of "surface" identities. Once again, the notion of "objective" best

interests, while empirically defensible, is no guarantee that they are adequate sources of collective action. Class theory thus has no prima facie superior explanatory power over other theories of social conflict, and on many plausible readings may have less.

6.8 Conclusion

My remarks on class theory in this chapter have been, for the most part, tentative in character. I have largely ignored complex debates about class structure, about the internal differentiation of classes, and so on. These are by no means unimportant, but for my purposes it is sufficient to engage the theory of class at a rather more abstract level. In the following chapter I shall take these concerns much more narrowly into the field of collective action and the problem of the individual free rider.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FAILURE OF THE MARXIST THEORY (ii): THE PROBLEM OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

7.1 Introduction

I have argued that, for purposes of analysis, the Marxist theory of revolution rests on a model of purposive class action. That is, it is built on a notion first, of classes, and second, of collective action. At the simplest level, therefore, there are two major potential challenges to Marx's treatment of the concept of revolution: challenges from within the theory of class and from within the theory of collective action. In the previous chapter I argued that the theory of class poses grave difficulties for the coherence of Marx's account of the revolutionary process. The Marxist account is in this respect, if not deficient, at least problematic. I turn now to the second of these potential challenges, that posed by the theory of collective action. This theory, it must be said at once, is a field practically without boundaries. Any exercise in engaging it must therefore also be an exercise in limitation.

In this chapter I shall set the limits in the following way: I first outline the fundamental problem, using the Prisoner's Dilemma as an illustration. I then turn to a discussion of the individual free rider problem as handled by Mancur Olson.

Thereafter I expand the discussion from Olson's treatment of Marx to Buchanan's, and thereafter consider the problem of collective action in more refined form by reference to the work of Elster. I then take up the problem of rationality in a more explicit way, first by reference to the work of Muller and Opp and then in a synthetic discussion of the nature of rationality itself. I conclude that the problem is not an "insoluble" one, but that the likely solutions point us consistently away from Marxism and towards other conceptions of collective action and rational choice.

7.2 The Problem Introduced

Consider a two-by-two payoff matrix such that

$$c > a > d > b \quad (7.1)$$

and

$$(c+b)/2 < a: \quad (7.2)$$

(a,a)	(b,c)
(c,b)	(d,d)

These two conditions define the so-called Prisoner's Dilemma. The outcome structure of this particular game has been a perennial source of fascination for social theorists, since it illuminates dramatically some of the most basic problems of collective action. For this reason it serves as a useful starting point in any discussion of the theory of collective action. Initially, therefore, we can consider four versions of the Prisoner's Dilemma (hereafter PD), generated by varying two parameters. These are: two-player against multi-player PDs, and iterated versus non-iterated PDs.

The simplest version, the two-player non-iterated PD, always leads to defection (as opposed to co-operation) by both players, since to cooperate is to risk receiving the worst possible payoff (b) if one's partner defects. Game-theoretical analysis, which will not be reproduced here, shows that the same outcome structure applies to multi-player non-iterated PDs. [1] Iterated PDs, by contrast, have a more nuanced set of outcomes, and their analysis produces some conclusions that are both counter-intuitive and politically significant. Briefly, both game theory and computer simulation show that co-operation is the solution to the iterated PD. I shall say something further at a later stage about the conclusions from computer simulation.

The non-iterated PD is highly significant since it is a paradigmatic instance of a situation in which individual rationality leads to collective irrationality. It does this

because any player is ignorant of any other player's choice, and must guard against receiving the worst payoff. But if every player chooses this strategy, the outcome is much worse for all than if they had managed to co-ordinate their actions. At some levels, therefore, the PD presents us chiefly with problems of co-ordination (as Jean Hampton has argued in the case of "step" goods and collective action. [2]). But for the most part, the problem here is the analysis of rationality, both individual and collective; and I shall return to this problem repeatedly. For the moment, I turn to the politically most important theme in the theory of collective action, namely, the "free rider" problem.

7.3 The Argument of Mancur Olson

The locus classicus of the theory of collective action is the work of Mancur Olson. [3] Olson begins with a simple question, namely, will the (rationally self-interested) members of a group pursue the group goal, as if the group were simply the individual writ large? And he answers: no, they will not, provided that they are rational and self-interested. Rather, he argues,

unless the number of individuals in a group is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests. In other words, even if all the individuals in a large group are rational and self-interested, and would gain if, as a group, they acted to achieve their common interest or objective, they will still not voluntarily act to achieve that common or group interest. [4]

The words "rational, self-interested" are of cardinal importance

here. For Olson, "rational, self-interested" behaviour is not simply a special case of human behaviour; it is the paradigm case. As he comments,

Groups composed of either altruistic individuals or irrational individuals may sometimes act in their common or group interests. But, as later, empirical parts of this study will show, this logical possibility is usually of no practical importance. [5]

In other words, the choice is either rational self-interested behaviour (which is normal) or irrational/altruistic behaviour (which is abnormal, and furthermore is insignificant). In short, Olson begins from a particular ontological position that is powerfully allied to utilitarianism.

Some Marxists would argue that this argument is by definition contaminated with "bourgeois ideology", but in fact, as I shall argue below, there are good methodological reasons for presuming, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, that individuals do act rationally and in their own self-interest. This argument does not exclude altruistic or irrational behaviour as possibilities, but there is no presumption in favour of such possibilities.

The heart of Olson's argument is that rational self-interested individuals will be free riders. Free riding emerges when a desirable public good P can be obtained only through collective action, entailing costs to each individual C. The free rider reasons that his or her payoff matrix looks like this:

	goal achieved	goal not achieved
I participate	$P - C$	$- C$
I do not participate	P	0

Since a defining feature of a public good is that all members of the group have access to it whether they contribute or not, the free rider will "reason" as follows: "either enough others will contribute, or enough others will not contribute. My own contribution will be too small to affect the outcome one way or the other. If enough others do not contribute and I do, then I suffer the costs without reaping the benefits. If enough others contribute and I do not, then I benefit from the outcome without incurring any of the costs. Therefore, it is in my best interest to be a free rider." Since all rational self-interested actors will reason the same way when faced with the same situation (a crucial notion which, when explored properly, undercuts Olson's argument, as I argue below) then everybody will choose to be a free rider, and no collective action will take place. The only groups that are exempt from the insidious effects of the free rider problem are relatively small groups (which classes are not): an argument which will be explored further.

In an exceedingly important passage, Olson anticipates a

fundamental objection to his argument:

Some critics may argue that the rational person will indeed support a large organisation, like a lobbying organisation, that works in his interest, because he knows that if he does not, others will not either, and then the organisation will fail, and he will be without the benefit that the organisation could have provided.

But, Olson replies,

In a large organisation, the loss of one dues payer will not noticeably increase the burden of any other one dues payer, and so a rational person would not believe that if he were to withdraw from an organisation he would drive others to do so.
[6]

Rationality, in short, leads to inaction.

7.3.1 Small Groups and Collective Action

Olson's general solution to the collective action problem -- that rationality militates against collective action -- does not apply to small groups, for which he offers a special solution. The mathematics of this solution are outlined in the Appendix; suffice it to say here that, when the benefit to the individual of obtaining the normal share of the collective good outweighs the cost of providing the whole of the collective good by himself or herself, then the public good may be provided. This basis for collective action is only present when group size is comparatively small. In short, Olson argues that large groups will only secure their collective interests if there is some system of selective incentives to spur rational self-interested individuals into collective action. In fact, further analysis,

as I argue below, shows that there is an intermediate group size which is likely to be optimal for collective action.

Now, the significance of Olson's argument for Marx's theory of revolution is obvious, and Olson attempts to develop a critique of Marx's model of class, although not one that is marked by any penetrating understanding of Marx's work. Olson's argument is simply that "class oriented action will not occur if the individuals that make up a class act rationally." [7] According to Olson, Marx's treatment of class theory is internally inconsistent, for Marx assumes simultaneously the rational self-interest of the proletariat and the probability that it will act collectively to secure its class interest; and the two assumptions, on Olson's findings, are mutually exclusive. There are, for Olson, two ways out of the inconsistency: either a theory based upon a model of irrationality rather than rationality, which would be consistent but not believable; or a metaphysical theory, in which the motivations of individual proletarians do not enter into the picture, being entirely secondary to impersonal social and historical forces. (I argued in chapter 3 that Marx does indeed deploy such a model on occasion, but it is not in any sense a plausible one.) This last possibility, according to Olson, "has no part whatever to play in an empirical discipline like economics." [8]

Now, Olson's critique of Marx does raise a number of important issues but it fails to capture the full complexity of Marx's views on proletarian collective action. That is, it is too

simplistic to bring out the full force of the effects of the free rider problem. Having drawn on Olson to outline the problem, I turn now to Buchanan's rather more probing discussion of Marx and the problem of collective action.

7.4 Allen Buchanan and the Critique of Marx

Buchanan begins from the same general problem -- the effects of rational choice on the collective action problem. Unfortunately, even though his knowledge of Marx's work is far more comprehensive than Olson's, he predicates a key part of his argument on a misreading of Marx's treatment of revolutionary motivation. In what follows I shall outline and criticise his account of the problem.

Buchanan's concern is with the manner in which principles of justice are present in or absent from Marx's work, and it is from this starting point that he engages with Marx's account of revolutionary motivation. Since Marx -- according to a leading school of thought -- dismisses principles of justice as inappropriate or redundant concerns, his explanation of revolutionary motivation must rest on a notion of rational self-interest. But, Buchanan argues, this is an extremely poor basis on which to build such an explanation; for

even if revolution is in the best interest of the proletariat, and even if every member of the proletariat realises that this is so, so far as its members act rationally, this class will not achieve concerted revolutionary action. This shocking conclusion rests on the

premise that concerted revolutionary action is for the proletariat a public good in the technical sense. [9]

-- that is, access to it is equally shared among all members of the group (in this case, the class as a whole) regardless of whether or not they contributed to it. Since revolution is a public good its production must be susceptible to the free rider virus; therefore, rational behaviour on the part of the members of the proletariat must block collective action. Furthermore, argues Buchanan, Marx is not unaware of the public goods problem, since it lies at the very heart of his account of processes such as the growth of monopolies, the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, crises of overproduction, and the immiserisation of the proletariat. Given this awareness, argues Buchanan, the Marxian must show either that the problem facing the proletariat is of a different sort, or that it is of the same sort but is soluble for the proletariat but not for the bourgeoisie. Buchanan argues that, if one grants that a public goods problem faces the proletariat, then there are three possible solutions: either (i) coercion (i.e. selective incentives) or (ii) in-process benefits or (iii) moral principles. The first solution is not available, at least not to an adherent of Marx's politics, since the notion that the political party ought somehow to coerce the proletariat is entirely alien -- as I argue in chapter 3 -- to Marx's account of revolutionary strategy. The third solution depends on introducing into the account motivations predicated upon categories such as freedom, justice, right, good and so on, and these categories -- according to Buchanan -- are equally alien to Marx's project. With regard to the second solution, Marx does at

times suggest that the psychological benefits of association -- in such forms as proletarian fraternity, solidarity, and so on -- are important motivating factors in a revolutionary politics. But he fails to develop an account of how these benefits mesh with the general theory of rational interest, or under what conditions they provide a sufficient motivating force; and in any case, as Elster points out, the argument tends to go through on a fallacy of by-products. [10] More importantly, since these are benefits that derive from an actually existing struggle, he does not suggest how such benefits could play any role in initiating a struggle. Marx is critically aware of obstacles to the development of proletarian solidarity; in this regard, Buchanan mentions (i) competition between employed and unemployed workers for jobs, and (ii) competition among employed workers for managerial or supervisory positions. To these Buchanan might have added a third factor, namely ethnic or nationalist rivalry among workers, an insidious obstacle to proletarian solidarity of which Marx was sharply aware:

The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the ruling nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself. He cherishes religious, social and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude to him is much the same as that of the 'poor whites' to the 'niggers' in the former slave states of the USA.... This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short, by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organisation. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. And that class is fully aware of it. [11]

In spite of these difficulties, Buchanan maintains that the notion of in-process benefits offers the best possibility of overcoming the deficiencies in Marx's theory of revolutionary motivation. Buchanan's rejection of the third possible solution rests on the claim that moral categories are essentially foreign to Marx's project. On Buchanan's reasoning, the best we can hope for is a purely internal solution to the collective action problem. Buchanan mentions one -- the idea of in-process benefits -- and I shall discuss others below.

With regard to the second major solution that Buchanan identifies -- to deny that the proletariat faces a public goods problem -- there are three possibilities. According to Buchanan, "the first appeals to a certain interpretation of Marx's materialism; the second to an extreme version of the doctrine of the immiserisation of the proletariat; and the third to Marx's historicist critique of concepts of irrationality." [12] The first solution contends that the calculation of individual proletarians -- and hence the notion of rational self-interest -- is not at issue. What is at issue, as Marx puts it in The Holy Family,

is not what this or that proletarian, or even the whole of the proletariat at the moment considers as its aim. The question is what the proletariat is, and what, consequent upon that being, it will be compelled to do. [13]

This extreme reading of the structure/agency couple is, as I argued in chapter 3, implausible as an account of proletarian politics. Whether one presents such theses in simply

metaphysical terms, or in terms of a structuralist notion of processes without subjects, there remains a crucial set of objections to be answered -- the sort of objections that Elster raises in arguing for a microscopic explanation of macroscopic phenomena. The second solution is equally untenable; it depends on an extreme reading of the immiserisation thesis, to the point where the potential costs of unilateral action disappear (i.e. at the point where the workers have nothing to lose but their chains. But as Elster points out, rulers have ingenious ways of creating far worse punishments than mere death for the rebellious. [14]) Buchanan rightly argues that such a reading is implausible; but he appears to be entirely unaware that Marx employs, as I argue in chapters 3 and 6, three quite different models of revolutionary motivation, of which the immiserisation thesis is by far the inferior. Since I largely discount the immiserisation thesis in Marx's work, I shall not consider this case further.

The third solution involves mounting an attack on the notion of "rational self-interest" as an ineradicably bourgeois concept, to be counterposed to a proletarian or socialist model of rationality. But here too there are acute difficulties. Even if one admits that a notion of "socialist rationality" may be legitimately imported into or read in Marx's work -- no easy claim to substantiate -- one must then show that (i) proletarians are rational according to the socialist model rather than the capitalist model, and (ii) that a socialist rationality

successfully overcomes the public goods objection. The second thesis cannot be evaluated, argues Buchanan, until a coherent model of socialist rationality is forthcoming. As for the first thesis, it is subject to the rejoinder that if Marx's analysis of ideology is correct, then the ruling ideas of the age are the ideas of the ruling class, and therefore that one can reasonably expect the proletariat as well as the bourgeoisie to be infected with bourgeois rationality. This is not, however, a very strong objection, since if we took this thesis literally then it would essentially deny the possibility of constructing an alternative -- a denial that flies in the face of Marx's suggestion that the new society matures in the womb of the old, as well as Gramsci's argument that alternative systems of morality, culture and belief can be thematised in embryo within the framework of capitalist society. Buchanan argues that one faces the further problem that production in capitalist society "alienates man from his communal nature, mortifies his body, and ruins his mind" [15] and thus places sharp limits on the development within capitalist relations of production of alternative systems of rationality. But this objection, valid as it may be, rests on the assumption that the immiserisation thesis is Marx's only explanation of revolutionary motivation, and I have already argued that this assumption is false. On the empowerment thesis, there is no particular reason why capitalist relations of production should hinder the development of a socialist morality; indeed, they ought to foster it. Nevertheless, as I suggest earlier, what is at work in this thesis is a strangely apolitical politics that is dissonant with fundamental themes of struggle and conflict

in Marx's work.

I think that Buchanan is correct to suggest that the classical rationality claim is open to criticism, but it seems that criticisms based on describing it as part of "bourgeois ideology" (true though they might be) are limp, and are not nearly so powerful as substantive criticisms based upon arguments about the nature of reason itself (not, in other words, arguments about "socialist rationality", which achieve little except to set up implausible dichotomies). I suggest, furthermore, that Buchanan's general schema of possible solutions to the collective action problem is a useful one (although one that remains to be fleshed out) in spite of his fundamental misunderstanding of Marx's account of revolutionary motivation. To summarise the possibilities raised here, there are essentially two solutions to the collective action problem: solutions that are internal to the theory, and solutions that are external to it. The internal possibilities include the notion of "in-process benefits"; the external possibilities involve some appeal to a notion of rationality grounded in the Enlightenment tradition, and include notions of the social contract as a theory of collective action, and accounts of rationality as the recognition of reversibility (the second of which I discuss further). Before returning to the question of rationality, I shall attempt to set up a rather more complete account of the collective action problem by drawing on the analysis of Elster.

7.5 Elster's Analysis of the Problem

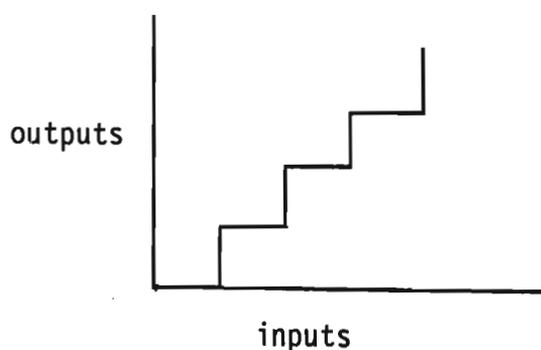
In chapter 6 I used Elster's definition of class consciousness as the capacity of a class to overcome the free rider problem. For Elster, this refers both to individual free riding and to classes as a whole taking a free ride with respect to their long-term interests. Elster then unpacks the problem into two parts: first, the conditions for collective action, and second, the rationality of collective action. [16] The conditions in turn he unpacks into cognitive conditions and determinants of motivation. Cognitive conditions include theoretical understanding of the matrix of social relations in which the potential actors are embedded. This understanding is to some extent a function of the complexity of social relations; since face-to-face confrontations have more impact than distant confrontations they will tend to obscure the deep structure of this matrix. Complexity -- as I argued in chapter 6 -- is thus an obstacle to cognitive understanding. Leadership helps to overcome this obstacle, although again, as I argued above, leadership may develop positional interests which in turn can also act as an obstacle to collective action. It is also worth noting that leadership, in its role as a disseminator of information, can act as an obstacle to irrational collective action. Mann cites the fascinating instance of a 100% solid strike in which surveys revealed the majority of strikers to be opposed to the strike (the official union was also opposed to it) but each worker believed that the majority were actually in favour and did not wish to scab. [17]

The determinants of motivation for collective action involve, essentially, the structure of gains and losses for the individual. They also depend on welfare levels, both relative and absolute. The gains and losses, Elster argues, should in the first instance be measured in terms of material utility. Three variables are at issue here: the gain from co-operation, the gain from free riding, and the loss from unilateralism. If everybody takes a free ride the payoff for each is zero, hence this variable remains constant and does not enter calculations. Following the solution for the non-iterated PD, collective action will typically not occur. Where it does, we must offer explanations of how these obstacles were overcome, and this part of Elster's argument I turn to in due course.

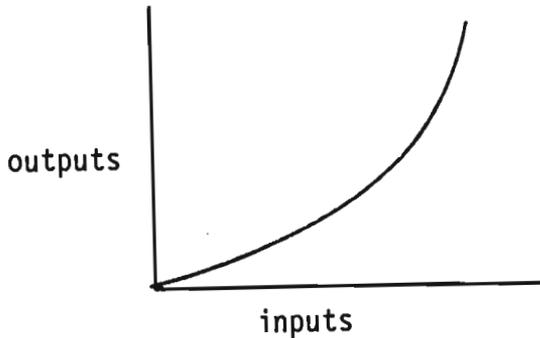
I shall not review Elster's discussion of the impact of welfare levels, except to note his conclusion that absolute poverty and great affluence will both militate against collective action, and that intermediate values are more likely to strengthen motivation. The remaining determinants he classifies as group size, distance between group members, rate of turnover in group membership, degree of group homogeneity and the "technology" of collective action, that is, the functional relationship between its inputs and outputs. With respect to the first, he argues that Olson's analysis is in general valid, with the rider that the smaller the group size so the larger the loss from unilateralism: a very large potential actor will scatter the forces of opposition, even if it does not act collectively.

Hence an intermediate value of group size is likely to be optimal.

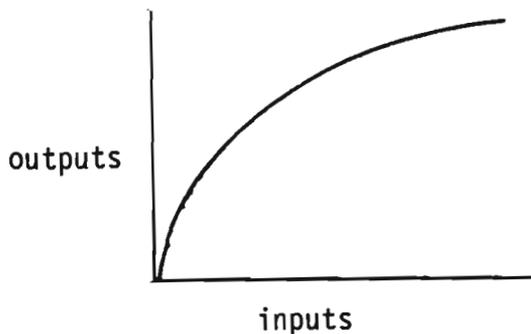
Isolation of group members will militate against collective action, as in Marx's classic analysis of the French peasantry. However, improved communication may also increase mobility and hence militate against solidarity. Once again, intermediate levels of communication will prove optimal. Marx, he argues, foresees the first possibility but not the second. [18] The potential obstacle posed by cultural heterogeneity is obvious -- I have already referred to it in chapter 6 -- and I will not discuss it further. The "technology of collective action", finally, presents numerous sub-cases, three of which are worth noting here. By this "technology", Elster means simply the relationship between the inputs and the outputs of collective action. First, the relationship may be a step function (as in "step goods"), so that the marginal productivity of participation is zero except at the critical thresholds, where participation in collective action abruptly becomes an attractive option, and even a single act of co-operation or defection can have a crucial effect on outcomes:



Second, the technology may be concave, so that initial contributions produce little while further contributions produce proportionally more:



This, argues, Elster, will typically reflect a discontinuity in organisation (as when a group becomes sufficiently large to afford resources it could not afford previously). Finally, the technology may be convex:



Here the impact of early contributions exceeds that of later ones, and we get with such an curve an effect of diminishing returns. Now, technology and motivation may interact in highly complex ways, some of which I will take up below. Before doing so, it is worth mentioning Elster's observations on self-respect. A sense of empowerment -- of being able to change one's

circumstances through willed action -- is crucial to rational collective action. Once again, alienation will tend to disempower people and hence will militate against collective action -- indeed, it will militate against individual action as well -- except on some argument of absolute necessity (which again, as I have suggested, is a poor argument for the most part). With these observations we can finally lay to rest the theory of alienation as a motivating force for proletarian revolution.

Turning to the rationality of collective action, Elster argues that, since we must always seek to provide microfoundations in explaining collective action, we should proceed on the basis that behaviour is rational and self-interested; if not that, at least rational; and only irrational as a final resort. The ordering is thus heuristic, and against this charges of "bourgeois sociology" are unintelligible. Elster then argues that in terms of rational self-interested choice, the solution to the non-iterated PD must be defection, whereas the solution to the iterated PD may be cooperation. The terminal point of the interaction must, however, be either unknown or indeterminable, since a backward cascade effect will operate from the final interaction, in which cooperation cannot be rational. Rational self-interest here, under certain circumstances, favours collective action.

Collective proletarian action will typically not depend on self-interest but can be forthcoming on the basis of rationality

itself. This will occur when externalities offset the free rider gain: such externalities include disutility from abstention (being sent to Coventry), positive utility from the utility of others, and positive utility from an equality of payoffs (that is, valuing equality as an end in itself). Nevertheless, these factors will not explain the initiation of collective action, since the preference here will typically be conditional: each will co-operate as long as the others co-operate. The problem here is to initiate the process, and the solution will depend heavily on the technology of collective action. Thus a threshold technology, producing output in successive steps, requires successive step inputs; a convex technology will make initiation relatively easy, but further collective action is comparatively more difficult to secure; while a concave technology in turn makes the initiation relatively difficult while the returns grow geometrically with time. With regard to the last problem, a small self-sacrificing leadership can play a crucial role. Thus a hard core of 5% may attract a further 10%, who would not otherwise participate, and these may attract a further 20%, and so on: collective action is secured by a cascade effect. Thus the initiation of collective action is not an insuperable problem.

Once it is initiated, by-products may play a key role in sustaining it, but a theory of by-products can never explain the origin of collective action:

The benefits from participation are essentially by-products. Anyone who joined them solely to get these benefits would

not get them. Nor, I submit, would they be very likely to succeed in realising the goal by which the collective itself is defined. To organise a strike demands hard, sustained effort, hardly compatible with the narcissistic attitude of those who engage in collective action just for the kick it gives them. [19]

Finally, with regard to irrational collective action, Elster mentions two explanations: the first concerns the observation that in very long iterations of the PD where the terminal date is known players co-operate at first and then, near the end, switch to defection. Elster calls this a cognitive analogy to weakness of will: the distant future simply fails to enter present calculations. The other explanation concerns the following sort of reasoning, observed in voting behaviour: "I am a typical member of a category. Typical members of this category will vote x. Therefore if I vote x then all the others will vote x." Thus the tail wags the dog. Elster calls this the "psychological implementation of the categorical imperative" [20] and notes that it can be socially beneficial. I doubt, however, that his comparison with the categorical imperative holds; here we have people believing that they can cause others to act in a certain way if they act in that way. This is not a maxim of behaviour but a belief about causation. Nevertheless, it relates very closely to a similar conception about reason which is rather closer to Kant's categorical imperative, although still not the same. It can be expressed in the principle "once you know that you are a typical member of a class of individuals you must act as if your own individual actions were to be multiplied manifold." Hofstadter call this "renormalised reason", and it constitutes an entirely separate solution to the collective

action problem, one that I take up below.

This review of Elster's work sufficiently establishes the complexity of the collective action problem for my present purposes. It is of course possible to complexify it further, but to do so here is neither possible nor necessary. The implications of the problem I take up below; for now I wish to return to the problem of collective rationality by discussing the arguments of Muller and Opp.

7.6 Intimations of Collective Rationality: Muller and Opp

In a collaborative article on rebellious collective action and rational choice, [21] Muller and Opp offer an expanded model for a public goods theory of rebellious collective action. Their model includes a crucial re-evaluation of the claim that the individual will typically perceive his or her contribution to be insignificant -- as, for example, in the model of Buchanan. If this perception is widespread, we have a classic collective action dilemma: where this perception is typical,

then individually rational average citizens will be free riders. And if average citizens choose to be free riders, then rebellious collective action is likely to fail, resulting in a continuation of the status quo. Thus what is individually rational is collectively irrational, since individuals who attach a high public goods value to rebellious collective action and choose to free ride are likely to obtain a less preferred outcome than if they all behave irrationally and participate. [22]

Thus the central paradox of human collective action. Now, Muller

and Opp argue that this paradox can be overcome by a "collective" rationality:

collectively rational individuals might estimate p_i [the individual's estimate of the probability that his or her participating in collective action will have an effect on the outcome] to be significantly greater than zero because they recognise that free riding is collectively irrational in the case of rebellious collective action, where group size and cohesion can be a factor of critical importance. And if p_i cannot be assumed necessary to be negligible, [sic] then the public goods value of rebellious collective action becomes a relevant consideration in the decision calculus of a rational average citizen. [23]

This is a point of critical importance. On the face of it, reasoning in this way is individually irrational: the logic of the payoff matrix remains compelling. If we actually find people behaving like this, we might be tempted to describe their behaviour as irrational. The question of appropriate description I defer to a later discussion. For now, it is worth noting that the full public goods model that Muller and Opp propose includes certain "by-products", including the expected entertainment value, or psychic reward, of participating in collective action. It is questionable, as Elster observes, whether such by-products can explain the initiation of collective action. Nevertheless, this part of their argument is not crucial to the conclusions I wish to extract from it, and I shall not consider it further.

When Muller and Opp test their model in empirical research, they find that

in contrast to conventional rational choice models of rebellion, the public goods variables, not selective incentives, appear to be the most important incentives for performing rebellious political behaviour. Expected costs

do not appear to be a disincentive, and they may even have some weak incentive value. This latter result is inconsistent with rational choice theory in general. [24]

Their general conclusion is that individuals may adopt a "collectivist conception of rationality" precisely because they recognise that what is individually rational is collectively irrational. Moreover, a cascade effect tends to develop here:

the perceived influence of the group as a whole will be a function of observation of the success or failure of dissident groups in the past. [25]

In general, therefore, a "collective rationality" can override individual rationality precisely because it recognises that what is rational for each is irrational for all. While Muller and Opp provide some insight into how this rationality can emerge, this part of the theory remains generally unclear. Nevertheless, the importance of the conclusions is clear and does not need to be restated. To make sense of these conclusions we need to rethink the notion of rationality itself. Before offering some observations towards this, it would be well to summarise the argument of the chapter thus far.

7.7 Provisional Review of Conclusions

The one-shot PD, on the face of it, has only one solution: defection. Only a pre-rational or supra-rational response to this dilemma is likely to issue in a different result. The iterated PD, where the terminus is not known, has a co-operative solution where the players are rational and self-interested.

Elster argues that working class self-interest is probably not an adequate motivation, although he does not rule out the possibility altogether. Rationality, however, could solve the working class's collective action dilemma if certain conditions for collective action, including its technology, are met. For the most part, this is a conditional solution. Simple irrationality may also produce collective action, as in the case of the ignorant strikers, and also in the two cases Elster mentions. Other solutions which might be mentioned are in-process benefits (which probably act to sustain rather than initiate collective action), moral imperatives, coercion, and some or other model of the social contract as a theory of collective action.

I think that it is crucially important to bear in mind that for Marx, the solution is simple rational self-interest on the part of the proletariat. Buchanan is therefore correct, I think, to argue that Marx's treatment of the problem is flawed. Buchanan's own argument, I suggested above, is itself flawed, because he presumes that immiserisation is the substrate of the working class's rational self-interest. That theory would certainly fail in this respect, and as I argued above it can be faulted on other grounds too. But it is not Marx's only account of proletarian motivation; there is also an image of authentic politics which can plausibly be meshed with the iterated PD outlined above. Nevertheless this does not constitute an adequate account of the collective action problem, since it is not sufficiently sensitive to other nuances and complexities, some of which I discuss above.

Marx's inheritors fare no better in this regard. Ironically, the most plausible account of the problem here is Lenin's. Given that self-interest alone is not sufficient to precipitate collective action, some other solution is needed, and Lenin produces one that is prima facie plausible. Essentially, his solution entails the coercion of the proletariat by grafting onto it a consciousness adequate to its historic task. There is also a sense in which selective incentives are built into Lenin's account: given his willingness to disenfranchise political opponents, access to the benefits of revolution appears to be something that is limited to those willing to bring them about. In this way the public goods problem is, potentially, overcome. But if Lenin deals adequately with the sociology of the problem, his politics remain unattractive and, in crucial ways, an inversion of Marx's own.

Luxemburg stands closest to Marx here, and is -- like Marx -- is most vulnerable to the pitfalls of the problem. She insists on the self-emancipation and the self-development of the proletariat and is wary of all attempts to coerce it or mould it from without. But on the argument made in this chapter, an agent as large as the proletariat will simply not prosecute its collective interests. Here an attractive politics gives rise to an unattractive sociology.

Kautsky is a rather more interesting figure in this regard, not because he proposes a coercive or educative model of

consciousness, but because of the possibilities in the parliamentary road to socialism. Simply put, parliamentarism does not involve the sorts of potential costs that are implicit in insurrection or mass strike activity. Since the costs are relatively small, getting people to engage in collective action is, perhaps, simpler in this strategy than in the others. On the other hand, a parliamentary strategy faces a different difficulty, and this concerns the sense of efficacy. Here voter apathy becomes important; it is difficult to have a sense of a single vote counting for much in the balance of things. Crucial to overcoming this problem is the efficiency of party organisation and the effectiveness of political persuasion; and this last point, of course, brings us to Gramsci and the ideological road to socialism. Of the four, this is perhaps the least susceptible to the pitfalls of the collective action problem. Arguably, Marxist strategies have failed in the advanced capitalist societies because of their appeal to disintegrative rather than integrative forces. It is probably easier to mobilise people on integrative strategies, such as the appeal to nationalism, rather than disintegrative strategies, such as the appeal to class enmity. This is particularly true when social identities are of a complex sort; workers in advanced capitalism are not workers simpliciter; membership of the proletariat is only one component of a complex social identity that extends from the microscopic level (membership in local associations) to the macroscopic (membership in the nation). The more textured the fabric of social identity, the more difficult is the appeal to a socially disintegrative principle.

The Gramscian strategy depends, as much as any other Marxist strategy, on disintegrative forces; but it also encompasses what we might call reintegrative forces as well. That is, the deconstruction of bourgeois ideology is accompanied at every level by a reconstruction of an alternative system of power and culture. An image of proletarian solidarity is of course present in all Marxian accounts of revolution, but here it is given a cultural dimension that is lacking in the others. If Elster is correct in arguing that proletarian rationality rather than rational self-interest is at the heart of a potential solution, this cultural dimension becomes particularly important -- in securing, for example, utility from an equality of payoffs, or utility from the utility of others. Raising these possibilities, however, does not solve the problem; they are possibilities only, and the effectiveness of the Gramscian strategy -- despite some experimentation in the PCI -- remains to be tested.

For the most part, then, the collective action problem brings the Marxian account of revolution into serious question; collective action is the exception rather than the rule, because the nature of collective human association itself gives rise to the paradox. Human beings are neither ants nor atoms; they are individuals trying with greater or lesser success to associate with one another, both because they want to and need to. My final question is: can a notion of collective rationality solve the problem, and if it can, is this solution available to Marxism? I undertake a tentative discussion of this problem in what follows.

7.8 Rethinking the Notion of Rationality

Part of the evidence for regarding co-operation as the solution to the iterated PD is a series of computer simulations run by Axelrod. Axelrod played competing strategies against one another in a series of very long iterations of the multi-player PD. [26] The consistent "winner" -- that is, the strategy which most successfully maximised its outcome -- was a co-operative strategy designed by Anatol Rapoport. Rapoport's strategy always began by co-operating and thereafter reciprocated the previous move of each player in subsequent interactions with it. In other words, it always met a defection with a defection but was immediately willing to return to co-operation. It easily triumphed over strategies that attempted to maximise by free riding. Axelrod's comments on the success of co-operatives strategies are highly instructive:

A major lesson of this tournament is the importance of minimising echo effects in an environment of mutual power. A sophisticated analysis must go at least three levels deep. First is the direct effect of a choice. This is easy, since a defection always earns more than a co-operation. Second are the indirect effects, taking into account that the other side may or may not punish a defection. This much was certainly appreciated by many of the entrants. But third is the fact that in responding to the defections of the other side, one may be repeating or even amplifying one's own previous exploitative choice. Thus a single defection may be successful when analysed for its direct effects, and perhaps even when its secondary effects are taken into account. But the real costs may be in the tertiary effects when one's own isolated defections turn into unending mutual recriminations. [27]

Thus, while free riding appears to be an attractive strategy, it can rebound on the free rider in ways that are not fully,

sometimes not even partially, comprehended. Such incomprehension is evident when the free rider fails to realise that he or she will inevitably meet somewhere down the road the echoes of earlier choices -- the unintended consequences of action. Once one perceives that one's own choices echo and re-echo in this way, the consequences for action are profound.

Can this recognition become generalised? In a parallel argument, Sartre argues that it cannot. The meanings that we inscribe in worked matter take on an existence that is independent of our original willed action: they pass from the transparency of praxis to the opacity of the practico-inert, and rebound on their originators in unrecognisable form. Thus the deforestation of China -- the product of seemingly rational choices -- had severely detrimental effects for agriculture as a whole:

If some enemy of mankind had wanted to persecute the peasants of China as a whole, he would have ordered mercenary troops to deforest the mountains systematically. The positive system of agriculture was transformed into an infernal machine. But the enemy who introduced the loess, the river, the gravity, the whole of hydrodynamics, into this destructive apparatus was the peasant himself. [28]

Likewise the plundering of the New World for precious metals -- that is, what appeared as wealth -- sent the Spanish economy into decline. These patterns of behaviour, Sartre argues, reveal that

society in its most concrete movement is shot through with passivity, and unceasingly totalises its inert multiplicities and inscribes its totalisation in inertia, while the material object, whose unity is thereby recreated, re-discovered and imposed, becomes a strange and living being with its own customs and its own movement. [29]

In a remarkably similar argument, Garrett Hardin shows that what appears rational for each user of common land -- to overgraze -- rebounds on the rational individual in the destruction of the land itself. [30] The tragedy of the commons perfectly encapsulates the unintended consequences of rational choice. Both Sartre and Hardin are pessimists here: Sartre believes that the practico-inert can be displaced from human affairs only under exceptional (and contingent) circumstances, while Hardin argues that coercion is the only way in which people can be got to conform to their long-term interests.

Axelrod's conclusions are somewhat more optimistic. Further simulation shows that co-operative strategies -- if there is a sufficiently large initial group of co-operators -- can drive out nonco-operative strategies in time; and furthermore, that the resulting co-operative environment is then immune to invasion from free riders. Evolution thus appears to have a bias in favour of co-operation. One temptation that issues from these conclusions is to argue that human rationality is a dysfunctional quirk of evolution that will not, in the long run, be selected for. Sic transit homo sapiens.

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Alternatively, one might argue that our conceptions of rationality are themselves at fault. To see three levels deep -- to perceive that one's choices can return to haunt one long after they are made (and perhaps regretted) -- is to be collectively rational. There is a crucial sense in which collective rationality is also rational for individuals; in the long term,

collective rationality will be maximising -- provided that a basic minimum of others is also thus rational. That is, while what is collectively rational is also individually rational, the reverse is not the case. On this view, what is classically regarded as individual rationality may start looking like irrationality.

Hofstadter makes a highly engaging argument in this regard. Reasoning, he argues, is a universal attribute. If I am rational, and I know that my fellow-players are also rational, and I build that knowledge into the structure of my choice, a remarkable outcome may ensue. If we are all rational we will all arrive at the same solution to the prisoner's dilemma: the structure of the collective choice is symmetrical, not asymmetrical. In a PD we will all conclude that the rational choice is either to co-operate or to defect. Knowing this, we then ask which outcome we prefer: all co-operate or all defect? Since the cells generated by asymmetrical choice are excluded, we will clearly all choose to co-operate. Borrowing an analogy from particle physics, Hofstadter calls this "renormalised" reason: it takes into account at every step that others are rational in the same way, and that they also take into account the reversibility of reason. On this reasoning, the one-shot PD is no longer a dilemma: it has a rational solution in the form of co-operation. [31]

The argument proceeds on the assumption that reason is

universalisable; it involves each recognising himself or herself in all the others. In this sense it connects strongly to key Enlightenment concerns, and this line of argument -- much more than Elster's characterisation -- brings us to the notion of the categorical imperative and the kingdom of ends. This in turn returns us to the question of moral choices and the problem of justice -- and, of course, to the absence of a coherent account of morality in Marx's work.

I am not seriously suggesting that these observations be taken as the "solution" to the collective action problem; we do not live in a world of universalised reason. At the same time, such reason is not thereby entirely denied us; the work of Muller and Opp shows that collective action can and sometimes does develop on the basis of a collective rationality, even in a world of particularised rationality.

7.9 Conclusion

The collective action problem is not insoluble; it is simply very difficult. A key precondition for its resolution is the coherence of the group that is advanced as a potential collective actor. Another precondition is that group size be of an intermediate order. The Marxian collective actor is a very large one and an incoherent one; class collective action is the most difficult of all. In itself, neither the problem of class nor the problem of collective action vitiates Marxism. Taken together, however, they are fatal.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RETHINKING THE MARXIST THEORY:

NOTES TOWARDS A SYNTHESIS

8.1 Introduction

In a vigorous restatement of the classical principles of Marx's model of revolution, Ernest Mandel has written:

At the heart of the debate is indeed one central question and only one: that of the potential revolutionary (or emancipatory) subject. One can only consistently oppose the revolutionary proletarian strategy, which is as old as Marxism and was defended not only by Lenin and Trotsky, but also by Marx and Engels, Rosa Luxemburg and Gramsci, and the whole mainstream of revolutionary socialists and communists throughout the last hundred years, by denying that wage labour is the only potentially (not of course permanently) efficient revolutionary force in bourgeois society and in the imperialist world of today, for fighting for a classless society and a withering away of the state. The stance of "farewell to the proletariat" as it has already been spelt out by André Gorz, Rudolf Bahro, Hobsbawm and, at least in nuce by E P Thompson himself, can lead to only one of two conclusions. Either it condemns socialism itself to become again a pure utopia, even though the alternative today is not only barbarism but the nuclear destruction of mankind. Or it points us towards substitute "revolutionary agents", whose economic potential, not to say moral-ideological inclination, to lay the ground for a classless society is infinitely inferior to that of the proletariat: third-world peasants bent upon petty commodity production, "free-floating" intellectuals, marginalised dropouts, etc. This then leads to no less utopian images and ever more reformist and reactionary proposals of action. [1]

There is a great force to this argument, although it is not what Mandel imagines it to be. For here, in a nutshell, is the socialist dilemma. It is a cruel one. On the one hand, the

classical revolutionary strategy is dead. On the other hand, the alternatives which have been advanced have nothing like the appeal of the original model, and are easily ridiculed -- as Mandel so deftly does. But his reasoning is entirely specious; for he argues that one is only entitled to criticise the classical account if one has something to put in its place. On this argument, the failure of the "new strategies" is somehow evidence for the plausibility of the classical strategy. What is not contemplated here -- and what must be contemplated -- is that there is in fact no tenable socialist strategy, that the socialist project itself is footless, and that we are condemned to live, in one way or another, with capitalism in one of its variants. It is not a palatable line of reasoning, but it can no longer be ignored. I undertake therefore to consider it in this final discussion. I shall proceed by discussing, rather tentatively, the horizon of socialist possibilities in the late twentieth century. To do this I shall consider three figures who represent, in different ways, a part of the range of alternatives. These three are Nicos Poulantzas, Rudolf Bahro, and André Gorz. I offer no complete account of their work; rather, I shall engage them in the course of a synthetic and thematic discussion. Before doing so, some further reflection on the meaning of power, the state, and revolution is necessary.

8.2 Rethinking the Theory of Power

In 3.8.2 I referred to Marx's tendency to associate the state

with politics, politics with power and power with classes. The disappearance of any one of these must entail the disappearance of all. These conclusions, however, follow from definition rather than argument: if power is simply the organised capacity of one class for oppressing another, then power and class are definitionally linked, and other relations of domination -- such as of men over women -- are not forms of power. This line of argument poses serious problems for a theory of social relations under socialism. What will happen to relations between the sexes? Will a substantial equality follow automatically from the attainment of socialism? If one argues that patriarchal relations are functional stabilisers of the class structure, then the answer is yes. This argument is not, however, remotely plausible. We need a much clearer account of the theory of power -- and of social relations in post-capitalist society -- than Marx offers us.

This also poses the problem of what is to happen to the state. The classical answer will simply not do, for three reasons. The first is that it is highly questionable whether the theoretical association between "state" and "class" is at all tenable. On Marx's third major account of the state -- discussed in 3.7 -- it is not. The second reason concerns the nature of administration in socialist society. The image of political (or rather nonpolitical) harmony that Marx offers us here will not do. Nor is it sufficient to liken the structure of society to an orchestra, in which all work together under the guidance of a conductor. What happens in the event of disagreement about which

symphony to play? The orchestra metaphor is singularly inappropriate, for the visible teamwork may conceal a fairly rigid (and authoritarian) procedure for reaching decisions.

The third reason concerns the nature of administration itself in industrial society. Kautsky is surely correct to argue that large bureaucracies are indispensable for the management of industrialism. He is also surely correct to argue that such bureaucracies are only controllable by centralised representative parliaments. Thus we cannot dispense with either parliament or the bureaucracy. Unless all crime disappears as well, which is possible but not likely, we cannot dispense with some or other coercive apparatus as well. In a word, we cannot dispense with the state.

Neither the problem of power nor the problem of the state is as simple as Marxists have depicted it. These problems need to be seriously considered. In particular, socialists need to develop clear arguments about the theory of justice, about constitutions, about bills of rights, about federalism and the positions of minorities, about politics itself.

8.3 Rethinking the Meaning of Revolution

In chapter 3 I argued that the term "revolution" does not necessarily denote a violent, abrupt transition, and socialists are under no obligation to use the term in this way. A key part

of the argument there was that revolution ought to be thought of in terms of outcomes rather than processes, and that the argument in terms of outcomes is more consistent with a value-laden account of revolution, certainly with a socialist model of revolution. Is there any point in adhering to the classical "great revolution" model in the light of this? I think not. There is, furthermore, considerable evidence for greatly restricting the use of the "great revolution" model. Skocpol has argued compellingly that the great revolutions -- the French, Russian, and Chinese -- have occurred under highly specific circumstances which are not likely to be repeated in any modern context. In each case a combination of a semi-agrarian economy and a major defeat in war effectively determined these revolutions. [2] This (structural) account has sometimes been taken as evidence against the Marxist account of revolution. On the argument that I make here, this is not necessarily the case; there are other (and, in a sense, better) models of revolution available to Marxists. But it is certainly evidence against the repetition of a great revolution in advanced capitalist society, however, and it needs to be taken seriously.

Arguably, a revolution of the near-classical sort could take place in a pre-industrial or "backward" society. This is the entire point, in some ways, of the theory of permanent revolution. But this strategy, as I argued in chapter 3, is not likely to issue in a socialist society. Socialism, certainly in Marx's sense, requires the full development of the forces of production, and the existence of an appropriable surplus product

for collective purposes. Can a "backward" society with a socialist leadership secure these economic preconditions? Arguably, the "authoritarian road to socialism" is an available strategy here. But there are at least two problems with it: on the one hand, the politics of such a society are not likely to develop towards the openness and discursiveness that Marx envisaged as one of the hallmarks of socialism. On the other hand, the necessary technology is not easily appropriated. One can borrow hardware but not education, for the latter requires a highly specific cultural matrix in which to expand. Perhaps the first Marxist to be aware of this was Lenin, and one of his final (unsuccessful) struggles was for a cultural revolution that would allow the infant Soviet state access to all sorts of infrastructural requirements that it desperately needed. In one sense, perestroika and glasnost are Lenin's cultural revolution arriving seventy years late. There is no guarantee, however, that they will achieve their object; and if they are held up as a model for the authoritarian road to socialism, then one must ask whether the intervening 70 years, including all that happened in them, were a necessary part of the process.

If Russia had followed a Menshevik path it might well have travelled the same economic road as western Europe -- and, perhaps, the same political road as well. The transition to socialism would then be as unlikely as it is now in western Europe. Thus the dilemma reappears. Of course, the absence of "actually existing socialism" in the modern world would close off

one present opportunity, and that is the possibility that the Soviet Union might be able to impose a world-wide socialism after successfully defeating Nato in a nuclear exchange.

Unfortunately, the resulting society would in all likelihood be nothing more than the associated mutants. An authentic socialist outcome to the superpower conflict is plausible, but only remotely so: of a similar magnitude to the possibility that technologically superior extraterrestrials might impose socialism on our irrational world. In the absence of such solutions, we must look to the possibilities in the modern capitalist state. They are not good. As Dunn puts it,

The modern democratic capitalist state, it seems, is the natural political expression of a form of society irritably but rationally aware of its own internal contradictions, but also irritably but rationally unconvinced of the possibility of transforming itself into a less contradictory form: a form which contrives to retain its current attractions, which is free of its current blemishes, and yet which possesses no novel blemishes of its own of even greater import. [3]

There are, however, glimmers of hope, some of which I discuss below.

8.4 New Social Movements?

The literature on this issue is considerable; here I take up only the arguments of Poulantzas, and only some of those. The highly tentative strategy that he begins to develop towards the end of his life depends on his analysis of the changing character of the state. What we are witnessing, he argues, is the penetration of the state into civil society at large: that is, the growth of

authoritarian statism. This involves new forms of legitimation and new roles for political parties, which increasingly become transmission belts for political decisions taken at the centre. In short, a profoundly anti-democratic strain of politics is invading democratic capitalist societies. Since the state increasingly penetrates civil society, its crisis of legitimation is worked out not only in political society but in civil society itself. Thus specific social movements emerge corresponding to the state's complex impact on civil society: youth movements, feminism, immigrant groups, movements for regional autonomy, ecological movements and so on. These diffuse and refracted struggles take place at a distance from the point of production but nevertheless directly affect the working class, which must somehow take account of them, since they have their own specificity and are not reducible to the class struggle. Exactly how the working class should do this is not resolved; as Jessop observes, Poulantzas did not succeed in developing a stable position before his death. [4] The following discussion, therefore, is restricted to Poulantzas's argument in the concluding essay of State, Power, Socialism.

At the heart of the argument here is a particular conception of state power. To take or capture state power, he argues,

is not simply to lay hands on part of the state machinery in order to replace it with a second power. Power is not a quantifiable substance held by the State that must be taken out of its hands, but rather a series of relations among the various social classes. In its ideal form, power is concentrated in the State, which is thus itself the condensation of a particular class relationship of forces.

The State is neither a thing-instrument that may be taken away, nor a fortress that may be penetrated by means of a wooden horse, nor yet a safe that may be cracked by burglary; it is the heart of the exercise of political power. [5]

On this "relational" view of the state, it is neither a structure to be smashed nor yet one to be captured; dealing with the state means dealing with the condensate of forces that are the state, and this in turn implies a mass struggle of a particular kind. In particular, it implies a democratic struggle, if a democratic outcome is to be achieved. But this does not mean simply a parliamentary struggle, for the winning of a parliamentary majority is not necessarily "the climax of breaks within the state". [6] Nor yet does it mean simply the replacement of the state with forms of direct democratic councilar or soviet structures. What it implies is both, simultaneously. The parliamentary road is indispensable if the dangers of Lenin's strategy are to be avoided. But it is not enough, as the failure of parliamentarism in Chile showed so vividly. Both are needed; and what the second needs is the flowering of a plurality of self-managed forms of political expression. This political pluralism is indispensable to the transition, for the decisive break will not occur without bourgeois reaction; that is, the bourgeoisie will not hold to the "rules of the game" when the transition appears imminent. The best guarantee against bourgeois reaction is a broad popular movement, predicated on the Left incorporating "new popular demands on fronts that used to be wrongly called 'secondary' (women's struggles, the ecological movement, etc.)" [7] Hence the salience of these new social

movements, which are not here depicted as an alternative to the proletariat but as an indispensable ally.

Poulantzas has no illusions on this score. As he puts it in concluding,

It can naturally always be argued, in the name of realism, (either by proponents of the dictatorship of the proletariat or by the others, the orthodox neo-liberals), that if democratic socialism has never yet existed, this is because it is impossible. Maybe. We no longer share that belief in the millenium founded on a few iron laws concerning the inevitability of a democratic-socialist revolution; nor do we enjoy the support of a fatherland of democratic socialism. But one thing is certain: socialism will be democratic or it will not be at all. [8]

How much sense does Poulantzas's strategy make? The sheer diffuseness of these new social movements, as well as their isolation from one another (and their propensity for bickering and quarrelling with each other) makes their institutional power highly questionable. It is for precisely this reason that their potential can only be realised in alliance with an institution such as a party of the proletariat. There are at least three dangers in such an alliance. The first is that it will become a form of populism, in which the socialist content of the struggle is entirely diluted. The key importance of a theory of hegemony is crucial here, for it is by the cultural dissemination and thematisation of socialism as a human project (rather than a simply proletarian one) that the ideological coherence of such alliances can perhaps best be forged. At the same time, it must be noted that Poulantzas distances himself from Gramsci in State, Power, Socialism: we are not here engaged in a war of position

as a preliminary to a war of manoeuvre; rather, it is the war of position itself which will issue in socialist revolution.

The second danger in such alliances is that the Left is not the only group which can take up the demands of these new social movements. The Right can equally do so; indeed, in West Germany ecological demands have become part of the common currency of party politics. In terms of a theory of interests, furthermore, the possibility must be faced that any one group will desert once its specific demands are met.

The third danger concerns the "reasonableness" of the demands of such movements. Does one enter into alliances simply for the sake of gaining allies, or should the demands of potential allies be conducive to the final goal? The issue is a difficult one by virtue of the complex texture of such movements. Ecological movements, for example, are of crucial importance here, but not all such movements are socialist or quasi-socialist in their orientation; "eco-fascist" movements, for example, must clearly be excluded, but in the case of other movements which have simply not articulated a clear political position the matter is not clear. The same problem applies in the case of feminist movements that aim only at a formal politico-juridical equality of men and women within capitalist society. On the one hand, one can enter into alliances with the aim of subverting such movements; on the other hand, one also risks being subverted by them.

New social movements in capitalist society thus provide a set of possibilities, but nothing more than that. One of these movements is worth looking at in a little more detail, and that is the Greens.

8.5 Rudolf Bahro and the Greens

The Greens movement, especially in West Germany, has produced -- or, in the case of Bahro, attracted -- a range of extraordinary theorists. The resulting discourse is too complex to engage here. However, the strategic arguments of Bahro are sufficiently compact to discuss briefly, and I shall do so in what follows.

The heart of Bahro's argument is that the threat of ecological disaster has made possible a "historic compromise", by which he means not some form of class collaboration but rather

an attempt to strip the state of its role as an instrument of capitalist domination at all levels. This could be done if we had a real movement of the majority -- not just in electoral terms, but a real mass movement that swept through the whole of public opinion. It would then be possible to open a breach between the state as a capitalist apparatus and the state as a structure in which millions of working people are employed. [9]

The breach with capitalism must be, at the same time, a breach with industrialism. A crucial part of Bahro's argument is that in order to survive, in order to secure socialism, we must de-industrialise; not necessarily in a return to dem Idiotismus des Landlebens but in a dramatically scaled down and decentralised productive system. In this schema of things, the proletariat is

not in the slightest sense a revolutionary class: it is positively reactionary, forming as it does a "second industrial class" alongside the bourgeoisie, and with its class interests irrevocably bound up with the perpetuation of industrialism. Fortunately, it is no longer a majority class, and can thus be bypassed; its political institutions are moribund, and

we should look positively on the disintegration of those organisations. It is not our task to destroy them or anything like that, but nor is it our job to help restabilise them. I don't want human energy wasted on a dying problem. I want to break through this whole discourse. The political conceptions of the labour movement must disappear, and the human energies that have sought emancipation by this route must be redirected along another path. [10]

That is, the problem does not lie with the bourgeoisie: the problem lies with the entire formation that the bourgeoisie and the proletariat constitute together. It scarcely needs to be said that this conception of socialism is very far from Marx's. Marx clearly believed that industrialism, as the embodiment of ever more developed productive forces, was equatable to progress. Bahro argues that this vision is formed in the absence of any sense that the world's resources could be limited or that the sheer success of industrialism in transforming the environment would eventually destroy the basis for human life. Certainly it must be said here that Marx is no ecologist; although in On The Jewish Question he approvingly quotes Thomas Munzer to the effect that "the fish in the water, the bird in the air, the offspring of the earth -- creation, too must be free" [10] the entire tenor of his work is in the opposite direction: nature is conceived of

as a force to be dominated and set to work for human purposes. There is scarcely any conception here of humanity and its environment living in a reciprocal relationship; indeed, the conception of mature communist society is heavily dependent on the assumption that natural resources are unlimited. Doubtless this view was as much a product of nineteenth century scientism as anything else. It is, however, clearly untenable, and Bahro's critique of Marx here has considerable force. It is worth mentioning here that if the problem of scarcity will remain with us, even with highly developed productive forces, then we need political forms appropriate to the mediation of that scarcity, forms which Marx entirely fails to contemplate.

Whether the Greens will usher in socialism or not, however, remains to be seen. It is worth wondering, for example, whether the imminence of ecological catastrophe will really drive rational actors into an "historic compromise". Once again, will people really act to meet their long-term interests rather than satisfy their apparent short-term interests, even if disaster will result if they fail to? In general, however, we should simply suspend judgement; electoral results will provide a basis for continuing evaluation. It is worth noting in this regard, however, that recent results have indicated some decline in support. In part this is due, as I suggested above, to the fact that all parties now speak the language of ecology to a greater or lesser extent.

Thus adieu to the proletariat. I turn now to another strongly

stated farewell to the working class, that bidden by André Gorz.

8.6 Computer Technology and the Vanishing Proletariat

Gorz's critique of Marx in Farewell to the Working Class turns on the distinction between "empowerment" and "immiserisation". He takes the former case to be Marx's stronger argument, and then argues that the development of capitalism has in no sense empowered the proletariat in the sort of way that Marx anticipated. Rather, precisely the converse is the case. The development of the productive forces, far from laying the groundwork for socialism, is functional only to the logic of capitalism itself; these productive forces are not in any sense open to appropriation by socialists, and socialism would have to remould the logic and rationality of the productive forces in practice. The corollary of this is that the proletariat in capitalist society, far from being an empowered class, is a radically disempowered class; it is incapable of taking charge of the means of production, and its interests lie in the perpetuation of capitalism, not in the overthrow of it. The proletariat, in short, is a replica of capital.

What, then, is the internal structure of this proletariat? Gorz argues that the key to answering this question lies in the nature of work itself. Far from empowering the workers, capitalist work relations disempower them by fragmenting work, particularising skills, and redirecting the consciousness of labour from the

global to the ever more local level. The result is a resentful and alienated class who do not like their work or their masters but whose opposition to both takes the form of low-level sabotage and the complete rejection of any work ethic. Thus in a strike in 1972 workers' demands centred initially on the right to work "at their own speed". When this was granted, they quickly discovered that their natural speed was not to work at all. [12] "Loss of the ability to identify with one's work", argues Gorz, "is tantamount to the disappearance of any sense of belonging to a class." [13] The consequence of this, he suggests, is that

For workers, it is no longer a question of freeing themselves within work, putting themselves in control of work, or seizing power within the framework of their work. The point now is to free oneself from work by rejecting its nature, content, necessity and modalities. But to reject work is also to reject the traditional strategy and organisational forms of the working-class movement. It is no longer a question of winning power as a worker, but of winning the power no longer to function as a worker. The power at issue is not at all the same as before. [14]

This analysis powerfully echoes Marx's own in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, in which he argues repeatedly that the nature of work produces the most catastrophic psychological consequences for the worker:

So much does objectification appear as loss of the object that the worker is robbed of the most essential objects not only of life but also of work. Indeed, work becomes a thing of which he can take possession only with the most unpredictable interruptions. So much does the appropriation of the object appear as alienation that the more objects the worker produces, the fewer he can own and the more he falls under the domination of his product, of capital. [15]

In these texts Marx opens a vast gulf between work in capitalist society and work in communist society, without giving any clear

account of how the transition from the one to the other is to be effected. What account then does Gorz give? Curiously enough, the hope for the future emerges from the development of the productive forces themselves, but in an entirely unexpected way. The heart of the matter is the introduction of computer technology and robotics. The resulting automation of work effectively splits the working class into three: at the top there is a small, privileged, well-paid stratum of highly skilled workers, typically involved in the servicing of the new technology. This stratum is effectively a labour aristocracy, and its positional interests make it fundamentally conservative. At the bottom is an equally small, badly paid, more or less permanently employed stratum, typically involved in doing the worst jobs in society, such as sewage work. In the middle is a vast mass of semi-employed or marginally employed workers, or rather non-workers:

In contradistinction to the working-class, this non-class has not been engendered by capitalism and marked with the insignia of capitalist relations of production. It is the result of the crisis of capitalism and the dissolution of the social relations of capitalist production -- a process stemming from the growth of new production technology. [15]

This non-class of non-workers comprises all those who have been marginalised by the new technology, those whose work has been abolished or effectively threatened by computerisation and automation. Gorz maintains that this non-proletariat is immediately conscious of itself, both subjectively and objectively; it has effectively escaped from the realm of work and thus prefigures the abolition of work that is central to the

socialist project. Computer technology, he argues, will effectively eliminate work in socialist society, or at minimum reduce it to the sphere of necessity that Marx anticipated in Capital III. And this non-class must inevitably expand with the further impact of microchip technology and robotics. In short, we have almost reached the stage of full communism within a capitalist shell; and the historical subject that will effect the transition is not the proletariat, but the non-proletariat that represents the abolition of classes in embryo.

Unfortunately, Gorz tells us practically nothing about how this is to be done, apart from the observation that it will entail politics; but

politics has no purchase or specific reality unless society itself is permeated by movements of social struggle that seek to capture broader spaces of autonomy from capitalist and state domination. [17]

This seems rather close to Poulantzas's conception of a multiplicity of refracted struggles opening up ever greater spaces of autonomy and self-management. Almost nothing further is said on the question of strategy; indeed, in his "utopia for a possible dual society" everything happens after the key political transition has occurred. But perhaps this is not crucially important. It is possible to imagine that the near-communism of advanced capitalism society will pass to communism proper almost unnoticed, or with only a minimum of political reconstruction. In this vision, the integument of capitalist society does not burst asunder, it simply dissolves; one day, we notice that it is

no longer there.

Is this entirely implausible? Here it is worth examining a little more closely Marx's observations on the future of capitalism. Marx was perfectly well aware that automation would radically transform capitalist society. He could not foresee the microchip -- Babbage, in Marx's own time, could see no further than mechanical computers -- but the possibility was clearly implicit in nineteenth century science. Indeed, there is a crucial sense in which his vision of communist society is predicated on the full development of automated systems of production. Automation would either eliminate work altogether or reduce it to a minimum. What, then, would be the impact of automation within capitalist society itself? For one thing, it will lead to a massive rise in the ratio c/v , the organic composition of capital:

direct labour together with its quantity disappears as the determining principle of production -- the creation of use-values -- and is not only reduced quantitatively to a slight proportion, but also qualitatively to a subordinate though still indispensable aspect, as compared to the general scientific labour, the technological application of the natural sciences on the one hand, as well as [compared to] the general force of production arising from the social structuring of the whole of production -- [a force of production] which appears as a natural endowment of social labour (although it is a historical product). Thus capitalism works to its own dissolution as the form dominating production. [18]

Is it possible to imagine the ratio c/v becoming infinitely large -- that is, the numerator becoming $= 0$? Not in capitalist society:

If the whole class of wage-workers were to be abolished owing to machinery, how dreadful that would be for capital which, without wage-labour, ceases to be capital! [19]

Rather more carefully, he argues that as technological innovations proceeds,

It is no longer true so much that labour figures as [something] comprised in the production process, but rather the human being has the relation of caretaker and regulator to the production process itself.... He steps alongside the production process, instead of being its main agent.... As soon as labour in its direct form has ceased to be the great source of wealth, labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and hence exchange value [ceases and must cease to be the measure] of use-value. The surplus labour of the mass of people has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth. [20]

The central contradiction of capitalism, that is, is its tendency to reduce labour-time to a minimum while labour-time is simultaneously the measure of wealth. These circumstances are the conditions for the destruction of capitalism: thus the numerator in the organic composition of capital cannot be = 0; mathematically, the condition is either absurd or marks a discontinuity in the function. Of course, if the labour-theory of value is itself at fault then matters appear in a somewhat different light; it would then be possible to imagine a society based on the private appropriation of profit in which all wealth is produced by machines and the proletariat -- that is, the stratum of workers not engaged in service industries (which must expand massively in this schema) is permanently on the dole.

In this context, we must ask once again what is meant by the "maturity" of capitalism. Marx clearly thought that it was

mature for revolution in his own time; at the same time, he clearly envisaged massive technological development in capitalism's future. Arguably, what he had in mind here was that a socialist revolution was possible in his own day but that it would be a long time before socialism would develop the necessary technological preconditions for communism. The further development of capitalism, on this view, is simply the development of the conditions for communist society within capitalism itself. On this reading, the advanced capitalist societies have clearly reached, or almost reached, the "full" maturity that is implicit in the notion of the organic composition of capital. They are ripe for communism. Yet a transition to communism appears more unlikely now than ever before, and further technological innovation -- that is, the full abolition of work in the traditional sense -- does not appear likely to result in revolution. Rather the opposite is the case. Three possibilities emerge here. Either the labour-theory of value is wrong, and technology does not necessarily drive capitalism in the direction of communism. Or it is not wrong, but the notion of the transition is wrong; the integument of capitalist society will not burst asunder, it will simply disintegrate. Or, finally, the "contradictions" are real but manageable, and a distinctly political struggle is necessary to effect the transition, a political struggle that is not at all likely to be sharp and violent but will be organic, relatively low-key, and protracted. On this view, there is a distinct possibility that Social Democracy will usher in communism, given

cumulative reform and time. I very much doubt that the theory of the terminal contradictions of capitalism any longer holds water. Contradictions there may be and clearly are, but they have not thus far proved to be unmanageable, and there is no likelihood that they will so prove in the future. In retrospect, Bernstein clearly wins this part of the debate on revisionism.

As for the second part of Bernstein's argument -- that cumulative reform will, almost unnoticed, result in socialism -- I think it better that the possibility be raised rather than asserted. It is quite conceivable that the future of capitalism will not be socialism but a powerfully yet subtly authoritarian society in which social dysfunction is a permanent feature but is marginalised and ghettoised, in which unemployment is endemic but suitably doled, in which service industries almost entirely replace industrial enterprise, and in which the few fragments of class cohesion that now exist disappear entirely.

8.7 Conclusion

Capitalism today, as not a few commentators have observed, is not the capitalism of Capital. It has evolved in directions which, while not entirely unforeseen, were certainly not what Marx usually expected. To transform it requires innovation and insight, not the ritual repetition of incantations, of which the "historic mission of the proletariat" surely counts as one. This is not to say that the arguments I have reviewed in this essay are an adequate substitute. They are all deeply problematic, and

to latch onto them in desperation or relief is self-delusory. On the other hand, it is equally delusory to ridicule them in the way that Mandel does; the proletariat will not be resurrected easily, and certainly not by clearing away what is clearly regarded as "ideological muck". The ideological muck, if it is that, is precisely a consequence of the palpable incapacity of the proletariat to engage in revolutionary politics.

Capitalism is a rotten society -- rotten in the classical sense of producing misery and alienation, but also rotten in a much larger sense: rotten in that the conditions for revolution are not merely ripe but are positively decayed. It is entirely possible that the system-requirements for the realisation of socialism have come and gone. Even if this is true, however, it does not make political struggle any less important: for one thing, capitalist society will drift further and further into authoritarianism, lack of accountability, and the marginalisation of the poor if these tendencies are not checked. For another, a political struggle may in itself produce the necessary system-requirements for a socialist struggle proper. As Przeworski puts matters,

The struggle for improving capitalism is as essential as ever before. But we should not confuse this struggle with the quest for socialism. [21]

CONCLUSION

Marxists have not been insensitive to the failure of the classical model. Only the most incorrigible optimist would still maintain that the next crisis of capitalism will inevitably usher in the proletarian revolution. In conclusion, then, it is worth looking briefly at the sort of explanations that Marxists have offered for the failure of this revolution to materialise. Broadly, we can divide these explanations into two: on the one hand, there is the incorporation of workers into capital; on the other hand, there is the separation of workers from capital.

On the first account, the working class has been "bought off" by capitalism. This phenomenon is variously described by the terms *embourgeoisement*, *aristocracy of labour*, *affluent worker*, and so on. It asserts that crucial fractions of the working class have been either intentionally or unintentionally given a positional interest in the perpetuation of the capitalist system. Critical theory, in the hands of the Frankfurt School, has taken this position somewhat further, to argue -- in a mood of deep pessimism -- that the working class has been not only materially but ideologically compromised by capitalism; its alienation, on this view, is so complete that workers are perfectly content within that alienation. Capitalism both creates and fulfils artificial needs, and the system as a whole is impervious to revolution.

The other view holds that the working class has been effectively displaced from the metropolis to the periphery: workers in advanced capitalism are no longer workers proper, but are junior partners in the exploitation of the Third World. The variants on this argument -- which may broadly be called the underdevelopment thesis -- are many, but there is an essential pessimism to it as well. Of course, some of these variants hold out the hope of a revolution in the periphery which will then spill over into the metropolis; but for the most part this is an implausible vision. Such revolutions would typically turn out as mere changes of regime, since the institutional power of the peripheral nations is too small to resist the domination of the metropole. Only an international revolution would overcome this separation of workers from capital. Such an international revolution is not remotely plausible.

These accounts -- and others -- add something to our understanding of why the classical theory of revolution has failed. But they are partial explanations, and, as Jacoby has observed,

these partial explanations may be akin to pre-Copernican astronomy: each new sighting is fit[ted] into an essentially false map by adding circles. The point, however, is to reconceive the entire endeavour. [1]

I contend in this essay that the classical Marxian theory is essentially such a map. The basic building blocks of the theory are flawed: the theory of class founders on the complexity of interests and identities in advanced capitalist society, the

theory of collective action founders on a simple notion of self-interest, and the theory of politics is either too heavily determined to be of use or it presumes the translation of classes into actors in an essentially simplistic fashion which does not square with the complexities either of a theory of classes or of a theory of collective action.

It is part and parcel of the Marxian method to cast doubts everywhere. Yet the theory of proletarian revolution has all too rarely been the subject of such doubt. It has become a dogma, as much in a religious sense as in any other. Yet de omnibus dubitandum, and this must include Marxism itself. There must surely come a point where cumulative doubt amounts to disbelief. I submit that, in the case the the classical Marxist theory of revolution, this point has long since been reached.

APPENDIX

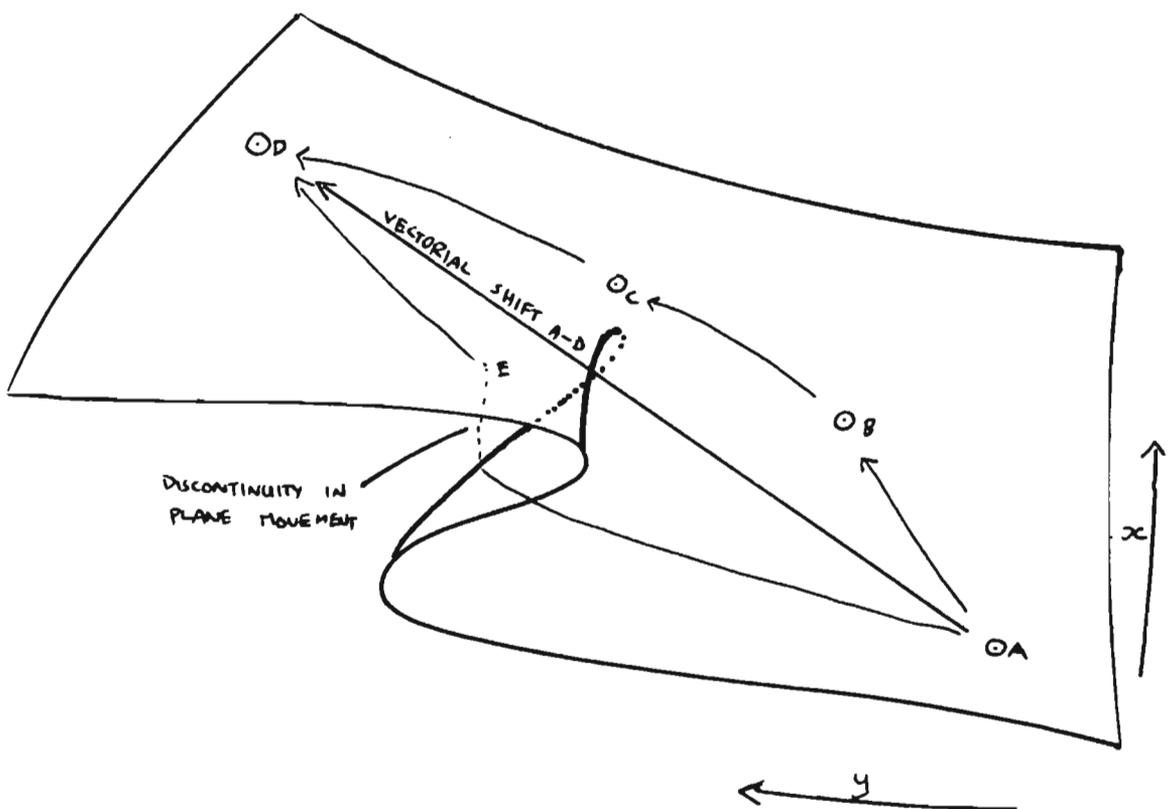
MATHEMATICAL MODELLING OF KEY PROBLEMS

1. Modelling Revolution with Catastrophe Theory

In chapter 3 I argue that the distinction between "revolution" and "evolution" does not stand up to conceptual scrutiny. This notion can perhaps best be illustrated by borrowing a model from the branch of mathematics known as "catastrophe theory". Although the term "catastrophe" seems to mesh with the apocalyptic vision of revolution that is central to the idiomatic sense of the word, neither term is intended here in an idiomatic sense. The word "catastrophe" is used by Thom to indicate a sudden and discontinuous transformation, but the general theory suggests that such transformations can be shown to be conceptually consistent with more gradual and continuous transformation. [1]

The mathematics and the topology of the theory are complex, but for our purposes one of the simplest catastrophe models will do. Consider a two-dimensional plane surface that is distorted through three dimensions, as in the diagram on the following page. A point on the surface of this plane will behave in interesting ways as its governing variables change. On the one hand, the point could move smoothly and continuously from point A through B and C to D as x and y increase simultaneously, remaining on the plane surface throughout. On the other hand, if

the value of x remains low as y increases, the point must make a discontinuous shift from A to D, represented in the "jump" at point E. Of course, the point does not actually "jump" since its field of movement is two-dimensional and not three-dimensional; it remains on the plane surface throughout. That is, its behaviour is mathematically discontinuous, since the plane surface is distorted through three dimensions.

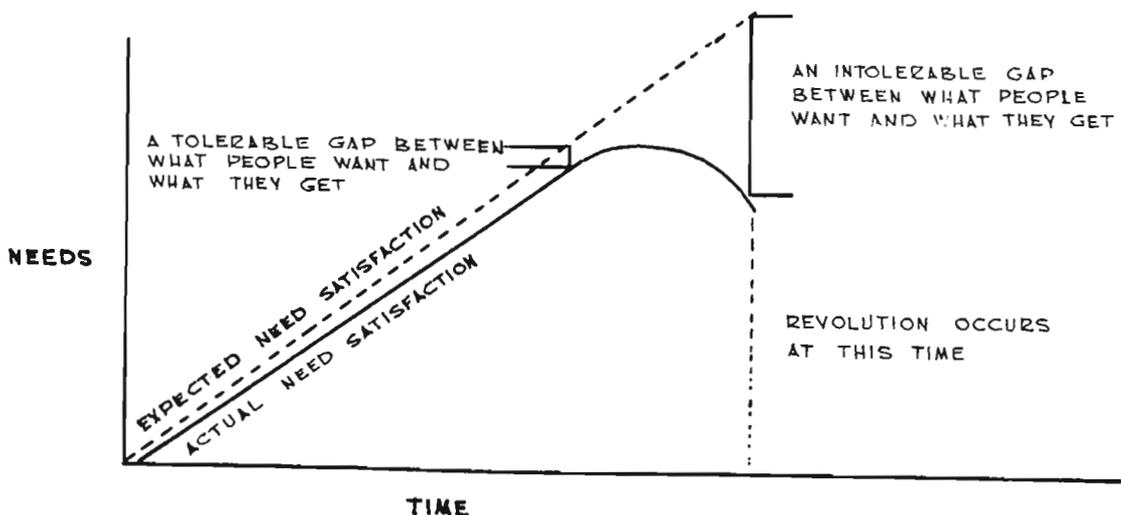


Both sorts of change -- continuous and discontinuous -- are clearly possible; and the term "revolution" in the sense I argue for in chapter 3 is captured in the vectorial shift A-D. If the shift occurs per media C and D, the sum of the vectors remains

the same. The relationship between evolution and revolution, then, is defined in terms of the "horizon of possibilities" of the conceptual plane. If one defines "revolution" simply as the vectorial sum A-D, then one can speak of a revolution that is evolutionary in character, and of an evolution that is revolutionary in character. If one defines "revolution" as the movement A-D where the value of x remains low, then one can distinguish between the two categories. The choice here is between defining revolution in terms of processes or in terms of outcomes. I argue for the latter interpretation.

2. Davies's "J-Curve"

In a widely influential article on the theory of revolution, Davies argues that revolutions are not sparked by immiserisation but almost by its opposite. [2] A revolution is most likely to occur when a "crisis of rising expectations" is precipitated, that is, when social and economic conditions, after a period of improvement, abruptly decline (though not to the level of misery). Graphing this relation, we get a characteristic "J-curve":



Davies argues that seeing matters in this light effectively puts paid to Marx's "immiserisation thesis". Certainly the central insight here is a powerful argument against it. For one thing, as Elster points out, forging the sort of revolutionary organisation that is necessary to effect a revolution requires a minimum of free time which diminishes as the necessities of life command more and more of the attention of the oppressed. On the other hand, against Davies, these conditions will also lower the penalty for unilateral action; if one really has nothing to lose but one's chains then death at the hands of the police or army counts for little. Elster also notes, however, that the forces of order can impose penalties far more unpleasant than mere death. [3]

3. Derivation of Olson's "Small Group" Argument

In chapter 7 I cite Olson's conclusions about small groups and collective action. The derivation of his argument is reproduced here. Olson argues as follows: allowing V_g to be the total gain to the group, V_i the gain to the individual, F_i to be V_i / V_g , T the rate at which the collective good is obtained (a function, approximately, of the level of organisation of the group, with the caution that complexity of organisation does not necessarily imply group efficiency), C the total cost of the good, S_g the size of the group, and A_i the advantage that an individual obtains from obtaining any amount of a collective good; then clearly $C = f(T)$.

Furthermore,

$$V_g = S_g T, \quad (3.1)$$

$$V_i = F_i V_g = F_i S_g T, \quad (3.2)$$

and

$$A_i = V_i - C \quad (3.3)$$

Hence,

$$\frac{dA_i}{dT} = \frac{d(V_i - C)}{dT} = \frac{dV_i}{dT} - \frac{dC}{dT} \quad (\text{chain rule}) \quad (3.4)$$

For a maximum (assuming second order conditions),

$$\frac{dA_i}{dT} = 0 \quad (3.5)$$

i.e.

$$\frac{dV_i}{dT} - \frac{dC}{dT} = 0 \quad (3.6)$$

i.e.

$$\frac{dF_i S_g T}{dT} - \frac{dC}{dT} = 0 \quad (3.7)$$

Allowing F_i and S_g to be constant,

$$F_i S_g \frac{dT}{dT} - \frac{dC}{dT} = 0 \quad (3.8)$$

i.e. when buying a collective good, the individual's gain is maximised when

$$F_i S_g = dC/dT \quad (3.9)$$

Consider again 3.4:

$$\frac{dA_i}{dT} = \frac{dV_i}{dT} - \frac{dC}{dT} = 0$$

Now

$$\frac{dV_i}{dT} = \frac{dF_i V_g}{dT} = F_i \frac{dV_g}{dT} \quad (F_i \text{ constant}) \quad (3.10)$$

thus

$$F_i \frac{dV_g}{dT} = \frac{dC}{dT} \quad (3.11)$$

Hence, for optimality of the purchase of a collective good,

$$\frac{dV_g}{dT} > \frac{dC}{dT}$$

by the same multiple ($1/F_i$) as $V_i > V_g$. However, we need to know not how much of a collective good is provided, but if any at all is provided. For individuals acting independently, therefore, the collective good will be provided if

$$V_i/V_g > C/V_g, \text{ i.e. if } V_i > C.$$

In common sense terms, Olson argues, we can presume that if the gain to the individual from providing the entire good by himself or herself exceeds the cost to the individual, then the collective good will be provided. However, there will still arise a tendency towards the suboptimal provision of collective goods, for since F_i is inversely proportional to group size, so the larger the group the smaller the F_i 's will be, and the more serious the suboptimality. Once my return is equal to the largest F_i then I will no longer contribute. [4]

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

1. Howe (1978) p 26
2. Walzer (1977) p 21
3. For overviews of this debate see De Kadt (1987) and Geras (1985)

Chapter One

1. Gamble (1983) p 25
2. Calvert (1970) p 15
3. O'Sullivan (1983) p 8
4. Huntington (1968) p 264
5. Johnson (1983) p 1
6. Ibid p 59
7. Gallie (1956) pp 171-72
8. Ibid p 180
9. Ibid p 179
10. Ibid pp 179-80
11. Ibid p 180
12. Connolly (1983) p 10
13. Ibid p 14
14. Ibid p 16
15. Ibid p 18
16. Ibid p 20
17. On this score, Walzer makes a useful analogy between the language of warfare and the language of morality. See Walzer (1977) pp 13-16
18. Connolly (1983) pp 2-3

Chapter Two

1. See, for example, Poulantzas (1973, 1979b, 1982).
2. The summary that follows is derived from the concluding chapter of Calvert (1982).
3. Parkin (1979) p 112
4. One might, of course, also interpret Hegel as a radical, or for that matter as a conservative. All three interpretations can be plausibly argued.
5. The issue is a little more complex than this. I argue in chapter 3 that Marx uses at least three different models of

- the state. None of them, however, is fully developed.
6. Bachrach & Baratz (1962) p 949
 7. Wolfinger (1971) p 1078
 8. The synopsis that follows is drawn from Lukes (1980)
 9. For an extended research proposal based upon the expanded method suggested here, see Hornby (1986)
 10. Benton (1982)
 11. Ibid p 18
 12. Oppenheim (1981)
 13. Ibid p 196
 14. Ibid p 51
 15. Gray (1983)
 16. Ibid p 79
 17. Ibid p 99
 18. Ibid p 101
 19. Therborn (1980) p 136
 20. Among other things, there remains the possibility that the concept of an essentially contested concept is itself essentially contested. I do not, however, propose to untangle this vertiginous epistemological snarl.
 21. O'Sullivan (1983) pp 3-4
 22. Arendt (1979) pp 28-29
 23. Ibid pp 18-19
 24. Ibid p 19
 25. Ibid p 44
 26. It ought to be added that Arendt's "conservatism" is of a far more complex character than Huntington's. For Arendt is a figure who has bedevilled the Left in a way that Huntington, who can be more easily dismissed, has not. The strong affinity between Arendt and Luxemburg is by no means the only significant issue here; it is also Arendt's attachment (akin to Luxemburg's) to the notion of the res publica, the public space, which has caused her words to echo, like a dimly heard and unwelcome warning, down the corridors of left politics.
 27. Huntington (1971) p 2
 28. Davies (1962). See also Appendix.
 29. Johnson (1982) pp 7-8
 30. Ibid p 7
 31. O'Sullivan (1983) p 3

Chapter Three

1. See Singer (1980) especially chapter 10. For Althusser's argument concerning the relationship between science and ideology in Marx's thought, see Althusser (1977) and Althusser & Balibar (1970). Similarly, Dahrendorf argues that much of Marx's work is an illegitimate blend of philosophy and sociology; see Dahrendorf (1969).
2. Miliband (1983c) p 37
3. In Bottomore et al (1985) p 17
4. Cohan (1975) p 54

5. See, for example, Colletti (1974) and Habermas (1972)
6. Draper (1978b) p 19
7. This is not to ignore the "permanentist" tradition within Marxism, a tradition to which I give some attention below. But even the theory of permanent revolution involves the idea of some classes wresting power from others.
8. My source for this quotation is Pluto Press's "Big Red Diary" for 1985. I have not been able to find it anywhere else.
9. Bottomore et al (1986) p 426
10. in Przeworski (1985) p 16
11. Again, Singer appeals to the failure of Marx's predictions as grounds for discarding the "scientific" claims of Marxism. See Singer (1980) chapter 10.
12. A potentially far more serious difficulty concerns the relationship between the systems equilibrium/disequilibrium of 1859 and the class agency model of 1848. See section 3.5 below.
13. For the genesis of the term "permanent revolution" see Löwy (1981) p 9 note 20
14. Marx (1977b) p 390
15. Ibid p 569
16. Marx & Engels (1977) vol 1 p 493
17. Marx (1977b) p 225
18. Löwy (1981) p 1. I am indebted to Löwy's trenchantly argued study of the theory of permanent revolution for much of the commentary that follows. I think, nevertheless, that his central argument is wrong.
19. Marx (1977b) p 237.
20. Ibid p 218
21. Ibid p 246. It is worth noting crucial ideas in this passage: the level of development of classes, the notion of a revolution held in abeyance leading to socialism, and the whole idea of a developed bourgeois culture. See also Löwy's gloss, Löwy (1981) p 12.
22. Löwy (1981) p 13
23. Ibid p 14
24. Marx (1977b) p 280
25. Löwy (1981) p 15
26. Ibid p 25
27. On this issue, a useful discussion of the letter to Zasulich and its drafts is Dunayevskaya (1982b) pp 183 - 88
28. Marx (1977b) p 580
29. Ibid p 584
30. Ibid p 572
31. Löwy (1981) p 23
32. Marx (1977b) p 416
33. Assuming, of course, that Marx does deploy a theory of justice. This particular debate is too complex to take up here. For an overview of the debate see Geras (1985) and De Kadt (1987)
34. Bahro (1977) p 27
35. Ibid
36. A link that some socialists have questioned. On Bahro's own views here, see chapter 8.

37. For an elaboration of this argument see especially Cohen (1978)
38. Elster (1985) p 318
39. Cohen (1986) p 20
40. Marx (1977b) p 389
41. Marx (1967) p 414
42. Ibid pp 414-15
43. Elster (1986a) p 199
44. Sherover-Marcuse (1986)
45. Ibid p 5
46. Ibid p 7
47. Marx (1977b) p 135
48. Sherover-Marcuse (1986) p 114
49. Draper (1978b) special note F
50. Elster (1985) p 438
51. Draper (1978b) p 87
52. Ibid p 88
53. Ibid p 88
54. Marx (1977b) p 589
55. Ibid p 231
56. Molyneux (1980) p 18
57. Przeworski (1985) p 16
58. Elster (1985) pp 444-5
59. Ibid p 445
60. Ibid
61. Marx (1977b) p 223
62. Elster (1985) p 426
63. Draper (1985) p 1
64. Elster (1985) p 447
65. Draper (1985) special note A
66. Harding (1983b) p 85
67. Ibid p 91
68. Elster (1985) p 448
69. Hunt (1974) pp 330-32; see also pp 308-9

Chapter Four

1. Pierson (1986) p 74
2. For Kautsky's views on the relationship between Darwinism and social theory, see Salvadori (1979) pp 23-24
3. In Lenin (1968) pp 44-45
4. Salvadori (1979) p 156
5. Ibid p 157
6. Ibid p 154
7. Ibid p 354
8. Ibid p 361
9. Ibid pp 361-362
10. Ibid p 129
11. Ibid p 268
12. Ibid p 272
13. Ibid p 253
14. Ibid p 259

15. Ibid
16. Hodgson (1977) p 14
17. Claudin (1977) p 75
18. The date is sometimes given as 1871, but recent research has settled on 1870. See Ettinger (1987). This biography, which draws heavily on recently discovered letters, corrects numerous errors of fact in earlier biographies.
19. Anderson (1979) chapter 1.
20. In this connection it must be said that Geras does not make any great play of the circumstances surrounding publication of The Russian Revolution. What he does, however, is assert that Luxemburg recognised her "mistake" in defending parliamentary institutions in the course of the German Revolution. His evidence is one of her last speeches in which she attacks "bourgeois parliaments". But the critique of bourgeois parliamentarism is by no means a new theme in Luxemburg's work; the entire point of her criticism of the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly is that she did not regard it as a bourgeois parliament. See Geras (1976) p 187
21. Luxemburg (1971) p 88
22. Ibid p 123
23. Marx (1977b) p 303
24. Luxemburg (1971) p 290
25. Ibid p 131
26. Marx (1977b) p 179
27. Geras (1976) p 120
28. Ibid p 120
29. Luxemburg (1971) p 237
30. Ibid
31. Ibid p 247
32. Frölich (1972) p 247
33. Frölich (1972) p 249
34. Ibid p 249
35. Bronner (1981) p 64
36. Ibid
37. Ettinger (1987) p 84

Chapter Five

1. Lenin (1968) pp 44-5
2. Ibid p 45
3. Ibid p 33
4. Ibid p 59
5. Yeats, Easter 1916
6. Harding (1983a) p 119
7. Ibid p 121
8. Ibid pp 121-122
9. Harding (1983b) p 242
10. Harding (1983a) p 242
11. Harding (1983b) p 195
12. Harding (1983a) p 242

13. Benton (1982) p 15
14. Polan (1984) p 10
15. Miliband (1983b) p 156
16. Harding (1983b) p 137
17. Ibid pp 139-40
18. Polan (1984) p 7
19. Miliband (1983b) p 159
20. Ibid p 161
21. Harding (1983b) p 277
22. Ibid pp 275-6
23. Ibid
24. Ibid p 304
25. Kiernan (1972) p 5
26. Elster (1985) p 438 n 1
27. Marx (1977b) pp 389-90
28. Lenin (1968) p 187
29. Sassoon (1980) p 114
30. Ibid p 113
31. Williams (1960) p 587. For his later reservations see Williams (1975) p 335
32. Hodgson (1977) p 113
33. Molyneux (1980) p 149
34. Marx (1967) p 438
35. Sassoon (1980) pp 147-48
36. Marx (1977b) p 229
37. Molyneux (1980) p 153
38. Ibid p 152
39. Joll (1977) p 91

Chapter Six

1. Marx (1977b) p 222
2. Ibid
3. Ibid p 506
4. Ibid
5. Bottmore et al (1985) p 75
6. Elster (1985) p 436 n 2
7. Marx (1977b) p 317
8. Hyman (1983) p 284
9. Ibid p 285
10. Functionalist explanations are plausible (and testable) only if some feedback mechanism is specified whereby the effects of a cause can reflect back on, and modify, the cause itself. Cohen uses functionalist explanations in this way (see, for example, Cohen (1986).) Failure to specify such mechanisms vitiates a functionalist explanation.
11. Marx (1973) p 701
12. Hyman (1983) p 294 n 19
13. The relevant section is found in Marx (1977a) p 383 ff
14. Marx (1977a) p 388
15. Elster (1985) p 337
16. Draper (1978b) special note F

17. On the teleology of classes in Marx, see Cohen (1982)
18. Poulantzas (1973, 1979b)
19. A teleological account violates simple principles of causality. If the object of history is an outcome of history itself then it cannot cause that history to happen.
20. Elster (1985) p 323
21. Ibid pp 330-31
22. Ibid p 347
23. Mann (1973) p 13
24. Ibid p 30; see also Elster (1983)
25. Mann (1973) p 42
26. Ibid p 52
27. Ibid p 69
28. Parkin (1979) p 112
29. Wood (1986) p 14
30. See for example Wolfinger (1971)
31. Mann (1973) p 46
32. The argument summarised here is drawn from Przeworski (1986). See also Przeworski (1985)
33. Elster (1986c) p 160
34. Mann (1973) p 70

Chapter Seven

1. See Ordeshook (1986) p 208
2. See Hampton (1987)
3. Olson (1971)
4. Ibid p 2
5. Ibid
6. Ibid p 12
7. Ibid p 105
8. Ibid p 109 n 30
9. Buchanan (1982) pp 88-9
10. Elster (1985) p 365
11. Marx (1977b) p 591
12. Buchanan (1982) p 97
13. Marx (1977b) p 135
14. Elster (1985) p 353
15. Buchanan (1982) p 100
16. The following summary is drawn from Elster (1985) section 6.2 (p 344 ff)
17. Mann (1973) p 50
18. Elster (1985) p 356
19. Ibid p 365
20. Ibid p 366
21. Muller & Opp (1986)
22. Ibid p 473
23. Ibid
24. Ibid p 483
25. Ibid p 484
26. See Axelrod (1984)
27. Quoted in Hofstadter (1985b) p 722. The quotation is from

- an early draft of Axelrod (1984).
28. Sartre (1982) p 162
 29. Ibid p 169
 30. See Hardin (1968)
 31. This argument is drawn from Hofstadter (1985d)

Chapter Eight

1. Mandel (1983) pp 45-46
2. See Skocpol (1979)
3. Dunn (1984) p 94
4. Jessop (1985) p 289
5. Poulantzas (1980) pp 257-8
6. Ibid p 259
7. Ibid pp 263-64
8. Ibid p 265
9. Bahro (1984) p 116
10. Ibid p 186
11. Marx (1977b) p 60
12. Gorz (1982) p 50
13. Ibid p 67
14. Ibid
15. Marx (1967) p 289
16. Gorz (1982) p 68
17. Ibid p 125
18. Draper (1978b) p 577
19. Ibid p 576
20. Ibid p 578
21. Przeworski (1985) p 248

Conclusion

1. Jacoby (1981) pp 124-25

Appendix

1. For the application of catastrophe theory to the social sciences see Rapoport (1983), Woodcock & Davis (1978)
2. See Davies (1962)
3. Elster (1985) p 353
4. Derived from Olson (1971) chapter 1

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