

*Current Perspectives in Social Theory*  
Volume 21

**BRINGING CAPITALISM BACK  
FOR CRITIQUE BY SOCIAL  
THEORY**

**J. LEHMANN**  
EDITOR



ELSEVIER SCIENCE Ltd  
The Boulevard, Langford Lane  
Kidlington, Oxford OX5 1GB, UK

© 2002 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

This work is protected under copyright by Elsevier Science, and the following terms and conditions apply to its use:

#### Photocopying

Single photocopies of single chapters may be made for personal use as allowed by national copyright laws. Permission of the Publisher and payment of a fee is required for all other photocopying, including multiple or systematic copying, copying for advertising or promotional purposes, resale, and all forms of document delivery. Special rates are available for educational institutions that wish to make photocopies for non-profit educational classroom use.

Permissions may be sought directly from Elsevier Science Global Rights Department, PO Box 800, Oxford OX5 1DX, UK; phone: (+44) 1865 843830, fax: (+44) 1865 853333, e-mail: [permissions@elsevier.co.uk](mailto:permissions@elsevier.co.uk). You may also contact Global Rights directly through Elsevier's home page (<http://www.elsevier.com>), by selecting 'Obtaining Permissions'.

In the USA, users may clear permissions and make payments through the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, USA; phone: (+1) (978) 7508400, fax: (+1) (978) 7504744, and in the UK through the Copyright Licensing Agency Rapid Clearance Service (CLARCS), 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 0LP, UK; phone: (+44) 207 631 5555; fax: (+44) 207 631 5500. Other countries may have a local reprographic rights agency for payments.

#### Derivative Works

Tables of contents may be reproduced for internal circulation, but permission of Elsevier Science is required for external resale or distribution of such material.

Permission of the Publisher is required for all other derivative works, including compilations and translations.

#### Electronic Storage or Usage

Permission of the Publisher is required to store or use electronically any material contained in this work, including any chapter or part of a chapter.

Except as outlined above, no part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the Publisher.

Address permissions requests to: Elsevier Science Global Rights Department, at the mail, fax and e-mail addresses noted above.

#### Notice

No responsibility is assumed by the Publisher for any injury and/or damage to persons or property as a matter of products liability, negligence or otherwise, or from any use or operation of any methods, products, instructions or ideas contained in the material herein. Because of rapid advances in the medical sciences, in particular, independent verification of diagnoses and drug dosages should be made.

First edition 2002

#### Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record from the Library of Congress has been applied for.

#### British Library Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalogue record from the British Library has been applied for.

ISBN: 0-7623-0762-5

ISSN: 0278-1204 (Series)

∞ The paper used in this publication meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).

Printed in The Netherlands.

# CONTENTS

<u>EDITORIAL BOARD</u>	<i>vii</i>
<u>LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS</u>	<i>ix</i>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	<i>xi</i>
 <b><u>PART I: BRINGING LUXEMBURG BACK AS A CRITICAL THEORIST OF CAPITALISM</u></b>	
<u>ROSA LUXEMBURG'S ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL: CRITICS TRY TO BURY THE MESSAGE</u> <i>Paul Zarembka</i>	<i>3</i>
 <b><u>PART II: BRINGING CLASS BACK FOR CRITIQUE BY SOCIAL THEORY</u></b>	
<u>CLASS AND CAUSATION IN BOURDIEU</u> <i>Elliot B. Weininger</i>	<i>49</i>
<u>GENDER, CLASS AND WELFARE STATE FORMATION IN THE 21st CENTURY</u> <i>Susan Thistle</i>	<i>115</i>
<u>ABOLITIONISM AND SOCIAL THEORY: SLAVERY, "WAGE-SLAVERY," AND THE VISIBILITY OF OPPRESSION</u> <i>David Norman Smith</i>	<i>143</i>
 <b><u>PART III: CONTINUING TO CRITIQUE CAPITALIST CULTURE AND POLITICS</u></b>	
<u>IDEOLOGY AFTER THE MILLENNIUM: PROBLEMS OF LEGITIMATION IN AMERICAN SOCIETY</u> <i>Richard Harvey Brown</i>	<i>185</i>

ALIENATION'S ANTIDOTE: THE VARIETIES OF  
CONTEMPORARY MYSTICISM

*Philip Wexler*

233

FANON SPEAKS TO THE SUBALTERN

*Valerie L. Scatamburlo-D'Annibale and Lauren Langman*

253

**PART IV: CRITICALLY THEORIZING  
GLOBALIZATION AS GLOBAL CAPITALISM**

SOCIOLOGY IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION:  
TOWARD A DYNAMIC SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

*Harry F. Dahms*

287

## **EDITOR**

Jennifer M. Lehmann  
*University of Nebraska*  
*(Sociology and Women's Studies)*

## **ASSOCIATE EDITORS**

Timothy Luke  
*Virginia Polytechnic Institute and*  
*State University (Political Science)*

Raymond Morrow  
*University of Alberta (Sociology)*

Lawrence Hazelrigg  
*Florida State University (Sociology)*

## **ASSISTANT EDITORS**

Gregory J. Rosenboom  
*University of Nebraska (Sociology)*

Susan L. Wortmann  
*University of Nebraska (Sociology)*

## **EDITORIAL BOARD**

Robert J. Antonio  
*University of Kansas (Sociology)*

Stanley Aronowitz  
*City University of New York –*  
*Graduate Center (Sociology)*

Molefi Asante  
*Temple University*  
*(African-American Studies)*

David Ashley  
*University of Wyoming (Sociology)*

Harry F. Dahms  
*Florida State University (Sociology)*

Norman K. Denzin  
*University of Illinois at*  
*Urbana-Champaign (Sociology)*

Nancy Fraser  
*New School for Social Research*  
*(Political Science)*

Robert Goldman  
*Lewis and Clark College (Sociology*  
*and Anthropology)*

Mark Gottdiener  
*State University of New York at*  
*Buffalo (Sociology)*

Douglas Kellner  
*University of California-Los Angeles*  
*(Philosophy)*

Lauren Langman  
*Loyola University (Sociology)*

John O'Neill  
*York University (Sociology)*

Moishe Postone  
*University of Chicago (History)*

Lawrence Scaff  
*Wayne State University*  
*(Political Science)*

Steven Seidman  
*State University of New York at*  
*Albany (Sociology)*

Steven Turner  
*The University of South Florida*  
*(Philosophy)*

Christine Williams  
*The University of Texas at Austin*  
*(Sociology)*

## LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

<i>Richard Harvey Brown</i>	Department of Sociology, University of Maryland, USA
<i>Harry F. Dahms</i>	Department of Sociology, Florida State University, USA
<i>Lauren Langman</i>	Department of Sociology, Loyola University, USA
<i>Valerie L. Scatamburlo-D'Annibale</i>	Department of Sociology, University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada
<i>David Norman Smith</i>	Department of Sociology, University of Kansas, USA
<i>Susan Thistle</i>	Department of Sociology, Northwestern University, USA
<i>Elliot B. Weininger</i>	Department of Sociology, City University of New York – The Graduate Center, USA
<i>Philip Wexler</i>	Warner School of Education and Human Development, University of Rochester, USA
<i>Paul Zarembka</i>	Department of Economics, State University of New York at Buffalo, USA

# INTRODUCTION

*Current Perspectives in Social Theory* was founded in 1980 by Co-Editors Scott G. McNall and Gary N. Howe. The Associate Editors included Alan Sica, Richard Applebaum, Jeffrey Halley, John Stewart, and Jonathan Turner. The volume contained articles by, among others, John O'Neill, Paul Piccone, Charles Tilly, Mayer Zald, Stanley Aronowitz, David L. Harvey, and Janet Saltzman Chafetz.<sup>1</sup>

The Co-Editors explicitly state that their intention was to represent “diverse theoretical traditions, representing . . . significant points in a sociological field marked by increasing differentiation and antagonism.” They did not plan to include solely their own theoretical perspectives; however neither did they plan to include “a representative cross-section of sociology.” Rather, they included “works which indicate the problems of sociological theorizing.” This was their response to a “prevailing crisis in the social sciences” (p. ix). In subsequent decades, the Editors, Associate Editors, members of the Editorial Board, and authors, continued to be of the highest calibre; the topics remained a broad spectrum of crucial issues in social theory and social reality; theoretical perspectives were always distinctive in their diversity. There are few eminent sociologists, social theorists, social theories, or vital theoretical issues that are not represented in these pages.

Ben Agger, Robert Antonio, Stanley Aronowitz, Seyla Benhabib, Richard Harvey Brown, Norman K. Denzin, Nancy Fraser, Mark Gottdiener, David Harvey, Douglas Kellner, Timothy Luke, John O'Neill, Lawrence Scaff, Alan Sica, Jonathan Turner, and Edward Tiryakian have been mainstays of the publication, as editors and contributors, since its inception. Clearly, this is a diverse group of scholars, with diverse theoretical orientations. Further underscoring the theoretical and disciplinary diversity, there have been contributions by Paula England, Jack Gibbs, Douglas Heckathorn, H. A. Giroux, Nancy Hartsock, Edith Kurzweil, Paul Piccone, Charles Tilly, Bryan Turner, Stephen Turner, Laurel Richardson, Kathryn B. Ward. In fact, eminent scholars and crucial issues of the social theory from the fields of Communication, Economics, Education, English, History, Philosophy, Political Science, and Women's Studies, as well as Sociology, found their places in *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*.



This was the state of *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, when I was honored to become its Editor in 1995. Its levels of significance and quality were both fortunate and formidable for me. I felt obligated and committed to maintaining the significance, quality, and diversity that have been its hallmarks. It was no easy task to find high calibre scholars to submit or contribute articles; to review manuscripts; to serve on Editorial Boards. So I learned the fine art of soliciting this work, as well as to rely on the renowned scholars already involved with the journal, to solicit others to write and review manuscripts, and continue doing so themselves. Although this remains a challenge, I quickly formulated another, equally daunting challenge for my Editorship.

I concluded that *Current Perspectives* was lacking diversity in several key areas.

First, cultural diversity was clearly problematic. The editors and contributors and topics were European, Eurocentric, and, predominantly male. This was not the intention of anyone on the journal. These are attributes of “social theory” in the United States in general, in sociology in particular. I have attempted to actively solicit editors, contributors, and topics from other cultural perspectives and about other cultural issues – specifically, from and about subordinate cultures – African Americans, Indigenous Peoples, women, and alternative sexualities – gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual – and people from other areas of the global economy. I have achieved a degree of success, but there is much work to be done before the journal has more diversity, and through diversity, attract more diversity. The appearance of being a Eurocentric journal – by and about the dominant culture – discourages participation by subordinate cultures, just as, for example, the appearance of being “conservative” i.e. advocating traditional nuclear families, prevents feminists from working with “marriage and family” journals.

Secondly, I felt that the critical theory published in the journal, like most critical theory, dealt primarily with domination – a Weberian, anti-Marxist, and essentially liberal paradigm (“social forces versus individuals”) that leaves class out of “race, class, and sex” and economics out of inequality – to the detriment of critical theories of race, sex, and capitalist global hegemony – all subjects of interest to critical theory. It is my belief that Marx, economics, and class must be brought back in to critical theory. In addition, I believe that social structures should be recognized by critical theory, in order to understand them, and, as Marx says, change them. I am encouraged by the articles in the present volume, which was not planned as a thematic issue, but ultimately found the best work submitted to be in the Marxist vein. This echoes a trend: a reconsideration of Marx – and Althusser, as well as Gramsci – reflected in recent work by Antonio Callari and David F. Ruccio (editors), Jacques Derrida, bell

hooks, Rhonda F. Levine and Jerry Lembrecke, Patrick McGuire and Donald McQuario, Ken Post, Robert Paul Resch, Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak, and Cornell West.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, I am working toward the inclusion of more diverse theories, theorists, and topics as against exclusion. Theory is difference, contradiction, conflict, struggle, and argument, the broader the better. I echo the founders of *Current Perspectives in Social Theory* in their introduction to the series, twenty-one years ago:

We make no attempt to select papers consistent with our own theoretical concerns and perspectives. Rather, the concern is to make accessible a variety of work based in quite diverse theoretical traditions, representing what we consider to be significant points in a sociological field marked by increasing differentiation and antagonism (p. ix).

## NOTES

1. These lists of scholars, like others noted here, are non-inclusive samples, designed to represent the themes under discussion, and not to represent all of the outstanding scholars involved with the journal.

2. Again, this is a non-inclusive list, but hopefully a representative sample.

Jennifer M. Lehmann  
*Editor*

# ROSA LUXEMBURG'S *ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL*: CRITICS TRY TO BURY THE MESSAGE

Paul Zarembka

## ABSTRACT

*No Marxist has written more about "accumulation of capital" theoretically than Rosa Luxemburg and the problems she analyzed have been almost always swept under the bed. With two major issues at stake, criticism of Marx's Capital within Marxism and the character of the dynamics of capitalism, the paper first reviews her 450-page The Accumulation of Capital. It then analyzes her post-humous critics, including Bukharin and Grossmann, council communists represented by Pannekoek and Mattick, 'independent' Marxists including Sweezy and Rosdolsky among others, and the Hegelian Marxist Dunayevskaya. The paper finds Luxemburg's work very important and is appreciative of Joan Robinson's reading of it.*

Some of the material in this paper was first presented at the International Seminar: "Development Issues of the Third World Countries", Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, India, November 22–26, 1999. This version was presented at the conference "Marxism 2000", University of Massachusetts, Amherst, September 21–24, 2000, and at the conference "Marxism 2001", Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences, Kunming, China, June 21–23, 2001. The description of Luxemburg's theory in Section I borrows from the first part of Zarembka (2000, Section III).

Throughout the paper, italicized portions of quotations are reported as is; bolding is used for our emphasis.

---

**Bringing Capitalism Back for Critique by Social Theory, Volume 21, pages 3–45.**

**Copyright © 2002 by Elsevier Science Ltd.**

**All rights of reproduction in any form reserved.**

**ISBN: 0-7623-0762-5**

## INTRODUCTION

No Marxist has written more about accumulation of capital theoretically than Rosa Luxemburg (1913, 1921), who devoted a long book to it, and then a long pamphlet summarizing her position and replying to critics (published two years after her murder). Luxemburg had taught Marxist economic theory for many years at the party school in Berlin, was known as an enthusiastic and popular teacher, and had been preparing an *Introduction to Political Economy*. In the process of preparing that book she uncovered an unexpected difficulty with Marx's work and undertook four months of intensive work of research and writing trying to come to the bottom of the issue. She thought she had succeeded: "When I wrote my *Accumulation* a thought depressed me from time to time: all followers of Marxist doctrine would declare that the things I was trying to show and carefully substantiate were self-evident. Nobody would voice a different opinion; my solution of the problem would be the only possible one imaginable" (Luxemburg, 1921, p. 47).

The difficulty Luxemburg found related to whether realization of surplus value in new constant capital and new variable capital can continuously occur in a fully capitalist economy. But she was wrong to think that she would not face criticism, including some criticisms with real political clout behind them. For at least two major issues are at stake: criticism of Marx's *Capital* within Marxism, and the character of the dynamics of capitalism. Furthermore, having been one of the clearest of anti-imperialists, as well as a proponent of a breakdown of capitalism, many critics read into Luxemburg's theory an instrumentality to these views rather than understood the theory on its own merits. Except for one footnote reference to another's work, imperialism does not even come up until after she has completed her entire theoretical exegesis and she starts her Chapter 27, "The Struggle against the Natural Economy". Crises and breakdown are ruled out of the discussion near the beginning of her first chapter when noting that "in order to demonstrate the pure implications of capitalist reproduction we must rather consider it quite apart from the periodical cycles and crises" (p. 35). Only at the end of her book, the very last paragraph, do we read the implication of her analysis regarding breakdown – capitalism is "the first mode of economy which is unable to exist by itself, which needs other economic systems as a medium and soil. Although it strives to become universal, and, indeed, on account of this its tendency, it must break down" (p. 467).

The first section below provides a summary of Luxemburg's theoretical contribution. Then, in successive sections we address important critiques made after her 1919 murder, Nikolai Bukharin's being the most well-known and most

instrumental in putting her down. These critiques carry differing political agenda – some pro-Soviet, some anti-Soviet, some “independent”, some Hegelian-based, some not so – but are not more cogent for their diversity. Typically, they choose a secondary issue, raise it to front-line status, and criticize that. The result is often either an error or a distortion. But confronting Luxemburg's theory in its full integrity is a rarity. When we come to Joan Robinson's reading, we find that the attempt is being made.

All of this matters, because we desperately need to improve our understanding of capitalism's durability and Luxemburg's work shakes up an understanding within Marxism. It is important in the same sense that any scientific effort for “truth” is important. Yet, we are not connecting this theory to Luxemburg's politics. Surely, it is connected, but how and to what extent?

## I. LUXEMBURG'S ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL

Marx wrote *Capital* theoretically characterizing an economy only capitalist without other social classes than capitalists and workers (and landlords, in some places). Marx was quite aware, says Luxemburg (1913), of the existence of other classes. His delimitation of the theoretical project to be theory of a purely capitalist structure (which she reviews on pp. 331–333) was only a theoretical posture to understand capitalism. However, according to Luxemburg, this delimitation got Marx into trouble analyzing the accumulation of capital and she proceeds by logical deduction.

If the economy is assumed to be capitalist and nothing but capitalist, consider that “the desire to accumulate plus the technical prerequisites of accumulation is not enough in a capitalist economy of commodity production. A further condition is required to ensure that accumulation can in fact proceed and production expand: the effective demand for commodities must also increase. Where is this continually increasing demand to come from” (pp. 131–332 and for following quotes)? There are only the two basic classes, capitalists and workers. Capitalists, on the one hand, sell to workers basic subsistence, but oppose anything further: “the working class in general receives from the capitalist class no more than an assignment to a determinate part of the social product, precisely to the extent of variable capital”, not “a groat more”. Capitalists also sell to themselves subsistence and luxury goods. But there are only so many luxury goods capitalists can increasingly consume, and, furthermore, the drive within capitalism is quite distinctly for accumulation, not merely luxury consumption: “the foundation of accumulation [is] the capitalists' abstention from consuming the whole of their surplus product”. So the capitalists only other outlet is marketing means of production.

Whatever the short-term possibilities for marketing more and more means of production, with no other outlet (civil servants, military, academics, clergy, etc., being considered hangers on to capitalists) the system must reach an impasse: “from the capitalist point of view it is absurd to produce more consumer goods merely in order to maintain more workers, and to turn out more means of production merely to keep to keep this surplus of workers occupied”. Thus, constant creation of a home market and/or imperialism into areas not yet, or not fully, capitalist is necessary: “the decisive fact is that the surplus value cannot be realized by sale either to workers or to capitalists, but only if it is sold to such social organizations or strata whose own mode of production is not capitalistic” (pp. 351–352).

Of course, *The Accumulation of Capital* is much more complicated and in places even difficult. Actually this is part of the problem in confronting Luxemburg’s work and most rely on the judgment of others and avoid carefully and directly analyzing what she says, not just in scattered quotes, but in trying to drill to the essence. The first third of the book leads up to and undertakes a careful analysis of Marx’s schemes of simple and extended reproduction in *Capital, Volume 2, Part III*. Recall that Marx was in new theoretical territory with the two-department schemes. Luxemburg does not only reproduce the arithmetical examples of Marx, she connects the examples to the concrete products being produced, arguing that it is one thing to assert that a certain numerical value belongs in a department called Department I and a separate question if the number actually refers to a concrete product assignable to that department or to the other department. The reason this is tricky is that Marx is describing an **interrelationship** of one department and another department in circumstances where **both** departments require means of production, produced in what is labeled Department I. And **both** departments require consumption goods,<sup>1</sup> produced in what is labeled Department II. We need to keep in mind this complexity as we progress.

After examining Marx’s predecessors Quesnay and Smith, Luxemburg turns to Marx’s scheme of simple reproduction. She finds this scheme important in laying out groundwork for understanding the accumulation of capital. That is, accumulation cannot take place without basic reproduction of the economic structure also occurring and Marx “repeatedly stressed and emphasized the fact that he considered replacement of the constant capital from the aggregate social product the most difficult and important problem of reproduction” (pp. 169–170, and fn. 1 citing three distinct passages from *Volume 2*). She summarized and elaborated Marx’s exposition of simple reproduction. However, Luxemburg also felt that “the other problem, that of accumulation, i.e. realization of the surplus value for the purpose of capitalization, was . . . pushed into the background, so

that in the end Marx hardly touched upon it" (p. 170). She believed it necessary to uncover exactly what Marx did accomplish with regard to accumulation of capital (also called extended reproduction), as well as the consequences of Marx's weaknesses resulting from his insufficient attention to the issue. When done, she felt forced to conclude that "realization of the surplus value outside the only two existing classes of society appears as indispensable as it looks impossible" and the analysis by Marx "offers no way out" (p. 165) – a deficiency in Marx only partly due to *Volume 2* never being completed, she said.

So, what did Luxemburg observe as she analyzed the extended reproduction schemes in *Volume 2*, an analysis which takes up four chapters in her book? What was it for which Marx offered "no way out"? She holds to his unchanging rates of surplus value and unchanging organic compositions of capital of *Volume 2*, and there is a certain advantage to the simplicity. By abstracting from the production of relative surplus value – i.e. from all technological change, the core of the problem Luxemburg finds can be discovered. In other words, we can come to the problem without the complications of what changes in the rate of surplus value or changes in the organic composition of capital would do.

Luxemburg does not find problems with Marx's arithmetical examples per se, but she inquires "whether it is not merely because mathematical equations are easily put on paper that accumulation will continue *ad infinitum* without any friction" (p. 119). First, she analyzes both of the numerical examples Marx provides – the first of which has a higher organic composition in Department I than in II, the second of which has them both the same (in both examples,  $c/v$  in each department remains unchanged as accumulation occurs). She concludes that accumulation by the consumption-goods Department II is completely dominated by accumulation by the means-of-production Department I (p. 127).<sup>2</sup> Luxemburg then shows by working through the arithmetical example provided in Marx that, under extended reproduction, the **increase** of constant capital in the consumption-goods Department II must exactly equal the **increase** in the means-of-production Department I of its variable capital and surplus consumption (pp. 120–127).<sup>3</sup> The mathematization of such reproduction schemes has been subject to controversy which is relegated to the Appendix to this paper; we may note, however, that Bukharin (1924, p. 159) later obtained this same result as Luxemburg's under a different formulation. Regardless of this controversy, the catch is what we have already cited: that in a capitalist commodity-producing society "a further condition is required to ensure that accumulation can in fact proceed and production expand: the effective demand for commodities must also increase. Where is this continually increasing demand to come from, which in Marx's diagram forms the basis of reproduction on an ever rising scale?" (p. 131).

Luxemburg (pp. 131–136) proceeds to eliminate one-by-one each possibility for increasing demand within a closed capitalist system, including foreign trade for which she implicitly agrees with Lenin (1899c, p. 92) that it only begs the question. Taking another tact, Luxemburg also says that one cannot just analyze a capitalist society as if it were the same as a planned socialist society. Surplus value does not simply transmigrate in the material form of the new means of production and the new variable capital required for accumulation; rather, capitalists must realize their surplus value, and obtain money. And still at this point, “we should only have got to the stage where surplus value has become money. If this realized surplus value is further to be employed in the process of enlarging reproduction, in accumulation, an even larger demand must be expected for the future, a demand which is again to come from outside the two departments” (p. 137).

Luxemburg believes that Marx was vaguely aware of a difficulty, a difficulty with which he never came to grips. Marx showed awareness through his discussion of hoarding of money, analyzed by Luxemburg mainly in her chapter “Marx’s Attempt to Resolve the Difficulty”, and also in the first part of her next chapter. The problem is not resolved by Marx, nor can Luxemburg find a solution internal to the logic; “no way out” remains. (In a later chapter, Luxemburg, pp. 343–347, also indicates that the schemes of extended reproduction are not consistent with Marx’s *Volume 3* analysis surrounding the law of the falling tendency of the rate of profit.)

If one has gotten to this point in her argument, the remainder follows even if there is still a lot to discuss and analyze. Note that we have not had to introduce any question, one way or another, about technological change to understand her basic point.

Section Two of her book deals with attempts by bourgeois economists to understand capitalist accumulation, starting, however, with the critic of capitalist society, Sismondi, whom Lenin (1897) had extensively analyzed. Section Three of *The Accumulation of Capital* represents her solution to the problem. Accumulation of capital compels a reaching beyond the existing space of capitalism, whether through creation of a home market or imperialist expansion. Most Marxists would not oppose much of what is written here, other than contesting that creation of a home market or imperialist expansion is a **necessary** consequence of an impossibility of realizing progressively increasing surplus value with only the two existing classes in capitalist society. In other words, penetration may and does happen and it does aid capitalist accumulation when it does happen, but it is not **required** by the logic of capitalism. This distinction between what can happen and what must happen is of enormous importance and requires us to examine the arguments of the critics of Luxemburg, particularly insofar as



they discuss, or do not discuss, the first third of *Accumulation*, the cutting edge of her work.

Before turning to criticism, we should note that Luxemburg considers Marx's schemes of extended reproduction a deviation from his overall theory:

Besides the analysis of enlarged reproduction roughed out in *Capital*, volume ii, the whole of Marx's work, volume ii in particular, contains a most elaborate and lucid exposition of his general views of the typical course of capitalist development. If we once fully understand this interpretation, the deficiencies of the diagram at the end of volume ii are immediately evident.

If we examine critically the diagram of enlarged reproduction in the light of Marx's theory, we find various contradictions between the two (p. 335).

She also noted later that "the diagram contradicts the conception of the capitalist total process and its course as laid down by Marx in *Capital*, volume iii" which was "based on the inherent contradiction between the unlimited expansive capacity of the productive forces and the limited expansive capacity of social consumption under conditions of capitalist distribution" (p. 343). She includes a citation to a long passage to support her understanding.

We also need to note the relationship of Luxemburg's work to Karl Kautsky's (1902) when Kautsky extensively reviewed Tugan-Baranowsky's (1901) book, a review over four issues of *Die Neue Zeit* but never translated into English. Within the third section of its five sections ("1. Introduction", "2. The Falling Rate of Profit", "3. Explanation of Crisis on Account of Underconsumption", "4. Tugan Baranowski's Crisis Theory", and "5. Changes in the Character of Crisis"), Kautsky writes:

The capitalists and the laborers whom they exploit provide, with the growth of the wealth of former and of the numbers of the latter, what is, to be sure, a steadily growing market for the means of consumption produced by capitalist industry; the market grows, however, less rapidly than the accumulation of capital and the rise in the productivity of labor. Capitalist industry must, therefore, seek an additional market outside of its domain in non-capitalist nations and strata of the population. Such a market it finds and expands more and more, but not fast enough (Kautsky, 1902, p. 80, as translated by Sweezy, 1942, p. 179).

This reads close to Luxemburg's conclusion, although not backed up by the type of extensive analytical work she was to do.

On the one hand, Kautsky's position cannot be taken too seriously, even while being confirmed by an earlier, 1884 article of his.<sup>4</sup> Neither the first (1887) nor late editions (1919)<sup>5</sup> of Kautsky's widely known and translated *The Economic Doctrines of Karl Marx* gives attention to a necessity for penetration non-capitalist areas. When Kautsky (1887, p. 207) summarizes the conversion of surplus value into capital, for example, he only says: "surplus-value cannot (wholly or in part) be converted into capital unless there exists a corresponding

amount of surplus-produce, consisting of means of production and means of life for the workers. But where do the additional workers come from? . . . The working class itself produces the additional workers who are necessary for extension of production, for reproduction on an extended scale.” On the other hand, Luxemburg did read and comment upon Kautsky’s review in a long footnote in her book. She notes that “he does not get anywhere near the fundamental problem”, that he is concerned with the problem only from its connection to crises and does not try to connect it to Marx’s schemes of reproduction (1913, p. 318, fn. 1). She is evidently more favorably impressed with Boudin’s (1907) review of a later work of Tugan-Baranowsky.

In any case, perhaps the more interesting aspect of Kautsky’s comment is that, when 1913 was to come, Luxemburg’s critics – and Kautsky himself – chose to ignore Kautsky’s opinion of 1902. His statement against Tugan-Baranowsky was simply “forgotten” and it was to be she who was to be read as the heretic.

## II. BUKHARIN’S SWORD AND GROSSMANN’S KNIFE

After Luxemburg’s *Accumulation* was published, several critiques immediately followed, including those by Otto Bauer, Gustav Eckstein and Anton Pannekoek. Lenin began but never completed a critique. These early critiques are discussed in Zarembka (2000), with Bauer’s (1913) commentary and Luxemburg’s (1921) reply receiving the most attention, and Lenin’s notes included as an Appendix (its first translation into English). Here we will only offer Luxemburg’s own assessment of the character of the early response to her work:

The ‘review’ of the *Accumulation* which appeared in *Vorwaerts* of 16 February 1913 [by Eckstein] was striking in tone and content even to the less involved reader; and all the more astonishing since the criticized book is purely theoretical and strictly objective, and directed against no living Marxist. Against those who had published a positive review of the book a high-handed action was taken by the central organ. A unique and somehow funny event – a purely theoretical study on an abstract scientific problem was censured by the entire staff of a political daily paper (of whom probably two at the most may have read the book). They did this by denying to men like Franz Mehring and J. Karski [pseudonym for Julian Marchlewski] any expert knowledge of economics, but allowed only those who pulled my book to pieces to be ‘experts’. Such a fate has happened to no other party publication as far as I know and over the decades Social Democratic publishers have certainly not produced all gold and pearls. (Luxemburg, 1921, pp. 47–48; according to Froelich, 1939, p. 159, Mehring and Marchlewski greeted her book with “great enthusiasm”.)

She also reminds the reader that Kautsky’s (1902) own, earlier critique of Tugan-Baranowsky had been quite in line with her *Accumulation of Capital*. Even as she lets pass Kautsky’s use of the word underconsumption and his

only seeing the problem of crises, not deeper problems (p. 79), still she notes that Kautsky had already refuted the attacks now leveled against her and had shown that, "even when properly used, these models [of Tugan] do not prove his thesis but, on the contrary, prove the theory of crises as caused by 'under-consumption'" (p. 80).

Five years after her murder in January 1919, Bukharin (1924) published a detailed analysis of Luxemburg's position, the same year as his aligning with Stalin in the post-Lenin struggles. Bukharin's work has marks of theoretical hatchet work and helped bury much, although not all, interest in Luxemburg's *Accumulation*. Roman Rosdolsky (1968, p. 450, fn. 6) explains that "Bukharin saw his task as that of breaking the still very strong influence of 'Luxemburgism' within the German Communist Party (KPD), and any means seemed justified". An interpretation by Paul Mattick (1974, p. 92) goes beyond the German situation, saying that it was part of the Bolshevik struggle at that time "to clean the tradition linked to her out of the communist parties".

Bukharin's critique omits citing any earlier critiques and the omission of reference to Bauer's is particularly curious since Luxemburg had devoted considerable attention to Bauer in her *Anti-Critique*. Also, Bukharin's last page citation to Luxemburg's *Anti-Critique* is to a page only halfway through the second of her six chapters (i.e. p. 76). But Bukharin must have felt on solid ground. As editor of *Pravda*, he surely knew Lenin's 1922 statement that Luxemburg "was mistaken on the theory of the accumulation of capital"; indeed, Lenin's statement was published in *Pravda* in April 1924, the same year as Bukharin's critique of her (Bukharin may even have caused its publication).

Bukharin's criticisms are often attacking the words Luxemburg uses to express herself. For example, when Luxemburg cannot find "for whom" accumulation takes place in Marx's analysis, Bukharin attacks her for asking for a subjective aim, a purpose, amounting to a teleology (pp. 163–164). Or he quotes her saying "in so far as consumption takes place and grows, no accumulation takes place" and he retorts that "such sophistry is in fact vastly removed from any dialectic, for it is immediately apparent to everyone that the growth of consumption *cannot take place* as a continuous, uninterrupted phenomenon *without corresponding accumulation*" (p. 165). Actually, Luxemburg is relying on Marx himself that capitalists and only capitalists **choose** between consumption and accumulation, recognition of which is fundamental to the distinction between simple and extended reproduction of capital. She is not saying anything more dramatic. Bukharin quotes her that "the maintenance of an ever larger army of workers [cannot] be the aim of uninterrupted capital accumulation". To this "complete misunderstanding", Bukharin states that the "consumption of the workers is . . . nothing other than the *production of labor-power* . . . [and that] the production

of *additional* labor-power is the pre-condition for the growth of accumulation” (p. 166). Luxemburg, however, was only saying that capital is not an employment agency for workers, that capital is not working **for** any interests of workers, including employment.

After eight pages of such types of argumentation, Bukharin already feels confident enough to conclude, “we hope we have thoroughly exhausted the fundamental arguments of Comrade Rosa Luxemburg as far as they are developed in the *Accumulation of Capital*” (p. 169). Even setting aside the character of the critique, such a conclusion appears before he turns to her *Anti-Critique* and virtually the only portion of the latter which interests him is her summary (in thirteen pages) of her extended explanation in *Accumulation*, her replies to other critiques of no interest, not even for one comment. It is difficult to take Bukharin seriously. Clearly, Bukharin wants to “get the job done” without too much work on his part. Surely, he was a busy party official. But it was his choice to study her, presumably because he thought her work important for some reason. Whatever. Bukharin simply does not exhibit a desire to seriously confront a challenge to Marx, but rather exhibits a desire to dismiss the challenge.

Bukharin goes on to quote Luxemburg from her *Anti-Critique* as she tries to understand the difficulty of realization under extended reproduction within the context of Marx’s theoretical delimitation to a purely capitalist society (note particularly the text we have bolded):

In the end, the solution of the problem is quite simple. Perhaps we are acting like the rider who is desperately looking for the nag he is sitting on. Perhaps the capitalists are mutual customers for the remainder of the commodities – not to use them carelessly, but to use them for the extension of production, for accumulation. Then **what else is accumulation but extension of capitalist production?** Those goods which fulfill this purpose must not consist of luxurious articles for the private consumption of the capitalists, but must be composed of various means of production (new constant capital) and the provisions for the workers.

All right, but such a solution only pushes the problem from this moment to the next. After we have assumed that accumulation has started and that the increased production throws an even bigger amount of commodities on to the market the following year, the same question arises again: where do we then find the consumers for this even greater amount of commodities? Will we answer: well, this growing amount of goods will again be exchanged among the capitalists to extend production again, and so forth, year after year? Then we have the roundabout that revolves around itself in empty space. That is not **capitalist accumulation, i.e. the amassing of money capital**, but its contrary: producing commodities for the sake of it; from the standpoint of capital an utter absurdity. If the capitalists as a class are the only customers for the total amount of commodities, apart from the share they have to part with to maintain the workers – if they must always buy commodities with their own money, and realize the surplus value, then **amassing profit, accumulation**

for the capitalist class, cannot possibly take place (Luxemburg, 1921, pp. 56–57, bolding added. Bukharin's quotation is on his pp. 171–172).

There seem to be no less than three possible definitions of accumulation of capital by Luxemburg in these two paragraphs: accumulation as “extension of capitalist production”, as “amassing of money capital”, and as “amassing profit”. Are these three identical ways of saying the same thing? Bukharin doesn't think so (and neither do we). Having quoted the entire passage several pages earlier, he proceeds to pick only one of the three (itself unconscionable) and wipes her off the map: “she has an absolutely atrocious conception of capitalist accumulation. For she *identifies* the accumulation of the total social capital with the accumulation of money capital! [sic] . . . She is of the opinion that the aim of the capitalists is incorporated in *money* as an end in itself” (Bukharin, 1924, p. 179).

In the middle of the next chapter to again justify his reading, Bukharin quotes and italicizes Luxemburg's entire observation, “to accumulate capital does not mean to produce higher and higher mountains of commodities, but to convert more and more commodities into money capital”. But he does not italicize nor refer to her very next sentence: “Between the accumulation of surplus value in commodities and the use of this surplus value to expand production<sup>6</sup> there always lies a decisive leap, the *salto mortale* of commodity production, as Marx calls it: *selling for money*” (p. 192). In other words, he simply ignores her saying that **money is something between two other things**. He instead once again refers to defining “accumulation as *accumulation of money capital!*” (p. 194).<sup>7</sup> Set up a straw woman, and knock her over!

Even ignoring the fact that Bukharin chooses to quote only one of three seeming definitions of accumulation from a passage he quotes in its entirety, if we go back to Luxemburg's discussion of money in *The Accumulation of Capital*, Bukharin's attack is further unjustified. Luxemburg is quite explicit at the very beginning of her Chapter VIII: “There is much to be said for [complete abstraction from the circulation of money] in the analysis of simple reproduction, where consumption is the be-all and end-all of production . . . . In the process of accumulation, however, the money form has an essential function . . . it has come to be a feature of capital itself, an element in the circulation of capital” (p. 139). Is an “element” in Luxemburg, to become, for Bukharin, identical to a definition? Wouldn't it be more correct to interpret Luxemburg that “an amassing of money capital” is a result of a necessity in the accumulation process? Bukharin chooses to label one phrase as her “definition” of accumulation, but it is really an unacceptable charge against her.

Having noted this distortion by Bukharin, Luxemburg's weakness is that her own definition of accumulation of capital, in a book with that title, is no clearer

than “progressive capitalization of surplus value” (p. 43). She could, thus, be said to set herself up for careless remarks of Bukharin’s type. However, one could hardly defend Marx, Engels, or Lenin for having been clearer on this definition and is a basic question addressed in Zarembka (2000).

That Bukharin’s critique had an effect, whatever its cogency, cannot be doubted. As an example of Luxemburg’s standing in Stalin’s Soviet Union, we may mention the opinion of her book by one of its leading political economists:

Rosa Luxemburg, whose mistakes the Trotskyist contrabandists adopted when they attempted to foist their ideas on the world under the guise of idealizing Luxemburgism, made *mistakes* of a clearly Kautskyst type on the question of imperialism. She considered imperialism not as a separate stage in the development of capitalism, but as a definite policy of the new period. In her principal theoretical work, *The Accumulation of Capital*, Luxemburg proves the inevitability of a collapse not because the inner contradictions of capitalism become extremely acute in the epoch of imperialism, but because of the conflict of capitalism with its external surroundings, because of the impossibility of realizing surplus value under the so-called “pure” capitalism (i.e. a capitalist society consisting only of capitalists and workers without any “non-capitalist mass” in the form of small producers). Basing herself thus on semi-Menshevik positions, Luxemburg could not rise to the Leninist conception of imperialism, to a correct understanding of its fundamental peculiarities and distinguishing attributes. Luxemburg’s mistakes in the conception of imperialism are closely allied to her erroneous positions on a number of important political questions: the question of the split in Social-Democracy, the agrarian and national questions, the role of the Party and spontaneous elements in the movement, etc. The theory of the automatic collapse of capitalism ensuing from Luxemburg’s erroneous theory of reproduction, which the “Left” Social-Democrats gladly utilize now to hold the working class back from revolutionary activity by means of supposedly revolutionary phraseology, in practice disarms the working class, spreads a mood of *passivity* and *fatalism* in its midst, stultifying its will to struggle (Leontiev, 1935, pp. 222–223).

Rosdolsky’s and Mattick’s interpretations, given above, of the reasons for the struggle against Luxemburg resonate with such attacks. Almost every sentence is a lie or distortion: she was an opponent of Kautsky; imperialism for her is not a “policy” subject to possible change; much of her book is devoted to the internal contradictions of a purely capitalist environment; she was no “semi-Menshevik”; she did not have a theory of “automatic collapse of capitalism”; etc.

Although not citing Bukharin’s specific critique of Luxemburg, in his principal work Henryk Grossmann (1929) displays no more sympathy for her work than does Bukharin. Where an earlier Grossman (1924) had had three matter-of-fact, short criticisms of her reading of Sismondi in his own appreciative reading,<sup>8</sup> the 1929 work is harsh on her. According to Kuhn (2000), Grossmann’s background

politics included student activism, in Krakow, Poland, but out of Krakow by the time Lenin lived there between June 1912 and August 1914. Grossmann became a supporter of the October Revolution and carried “a relatively unreflective enthusiasm for the Soviet Union” (Jay, 1973, p. 17, also, p. 151). Upon leaving Poland following upon a number of arrests for political activity, thereafter at the Frankfurt School since 1925, and a “close sympathizer” of the German Communist Party (Kuhn, 2000, p. 151), Grossmann must have known of the sword drawn inside the German Communist Party against “Luxemburgism”. This may partly explain the sharp character of his 1929 criticism of Luxemburg, which is scattered throughout his book and, in places, does not even deserve rebuttal (for example, he refers to her being “vacuous and scholastic” on simple reproduction, and says that for her “accumulation only seems to make sense if the consumption of capitalist commodities is left to the non-capitalist countries”, pp. 81–82).

Grossmann (1929, p. 125) observes that Marxism had been dominated by the idea of a breakdown of capitalism up until Tugan-Baranowsky's work. Tugan-Baranowsky's work, followed by works of Hilferding, of Bauer, and in 1927 of Kautsky, however, attempted to show that capitalism is a sustainable system within Marx's own schemes. Luxemburg wanted to weaken such Tugan-Baranowsky type of analysis by **correcting** Marx. Grossmann, on the other hand, wants to weaken the efficacy of Tugan-Baranowsky's analysis by **defending** Marx and he therefore charges Luxemburg: “instead of testing Marx's reproduction scheme within the framework of his total system and especially of the theory of accumulation, instead of asking what role it plays methodologically in the structure of his theory, instead of analyzing the schemes of accumulation down to its ultimate conclusion, [she] was unconsciously influenced” (p. 125) by Tugan and Hilferding,<sup>9</sup> influenced because they had created the interpretation of Marx he contests but she accepted.

Given absence of a careful critique of her argumentation, this position of Grossmann is a cavalier one to take against Luxemburg, given her whole Section One which does the analysis of Marx's schemes of accumulation that was expected of her by Bukharin and is now expected of her by Grossmann. Furthermore, Luxemburg has a whole chapter analyzing Tugan-Baranowsky and an explicit, biting criticism of him (also of Bulgakov and Lenin):

The opinion, that producer goods can be produced independently of consumption, is of course a mirage of Tugan-Baranowsky's, typical of vulgar economics . . . [T]he quicker growth of Department I as compared with Department II is beyond dispute . . . It is the foundation also of Marx's fundamental law that the rate of profit tends to fall. Yet in spite of it all, or rather precisely for this reason, it is a howler if Bulgakov, Ilyin [Lenin] and Tugan Baranowsky imagine to have discovered in this law the essential nature of capitalist economy as an economic system in which production is an end in itself and human consumption merely incidental (Luxemburg, 1913, p. 320).

Actually, Grossmann's charge of being influenced unconsciously by revisionism would not be strange if taken against Lenin who in fact was not very critical of Tugan's basic point but rather more tangential ones, and who is therefore closer to Tugan (see Rosdolsky, 1968, pp. 472–483 and Zarembka, 2000, Section II). Why is Lenin skipped over but Grossmann feels comfortable saying of Luxemburg that one "could scarcely imagine a worse distortion of Marx's methodological principles?" (p. 126). Perhaps, even by 1929, Grossmann had not seen or had not known fully of Lenin's analysis; the record is not clear. But there is enough in Luxemburg's work (e.g. pp. 188–189, 287, 317, and 320 – the latter two in her chapter on Tugan-Baranowsky) and in Bukharin's critique (e.g. pp. 204, 225, and 230) for Grossmann to be alerted to Lenin being worth examining.

Regarding Luxemburg's theory itself, Grossmann says that

Her own deduction of the necessary downfall of capitalism is not rooted in the immanent laws of the accumulation process, but in the transcendental fact of an absence of non-capitalist markets. Luxemburg shifts the crucial problem of capitalism from the sphere of production to that of circulation. Hence the form in which she conducts her proof of the absolute economic limits to capitalism comes close to the idea that the end of capitalism is a distant prospect because the capitalization of the non-capitalist countries is the task of centuries (1929, p. 42).

This conclusion shows nothing so much as Grossmann's failure to deal with the essence of Luxemburg's argumentation in Section One of her book, a weakness similar to Lenin's reading (see Zarembka, 2000, Section II). In other words, the issue of non-capitalist production, for Luxemburg, comes as an **outcome** of analyzing just those "immanent laws" of Marx's reproduction schemes, properly understood. In fact, the first time a non-capitalist environment could be said to come up in her book is in Chapter 21, but that is in the context of discussing the Russian Peter Struve, not offering her own. Also, Luxemburg does not shift out of the sphere of production to circulation, but rather **includes** circulation with production. And the reference to "non-capitalist markets" is Grossmann's wording, not hers, as if "markets" must previously exist. Indeed, we are considering market **creation** by penetration of non-capitalism production, a process described no better than by Lenin (1899b) and by Luxemburg's Chapters 27–29 ("The Struggle Against Natural Economy", "The Introduction of Commodity Economy", and "The Struggle against Peasant Economy").

Grossmann has other remarks on Luxemburg, which also serve to deflect interest in her work, and we will mention two of them. Regarding capitalism needing "to rely upon a non-capitalist sector" as his reading of her, "Luxemburg's entire hypothesis is totally irrelevant to the problem concerned . . . [C]apital accumulation [is] on the basis of a progressively rising organic composition of capital; from the fact that  $c$  grows faster than  $v$ . The question



of where the surplus value is realized is quite irrelevant" (pp. 124–125). To reply, we again note absence of any such "hypothesis" by Luxemburg; the role of a non-capitalist environment is rather a result of her analysis of Marx's work. Furthermore, in Marx's schemes the organic composition in fact remains fixed.

Regarding her argument that Marx had abstracted from foreign trade in his theoretical work, Grossmann, on the one hand, reproduces a passage from *Capital, Volume 2*, p. 474, supporting such an abstraction when analyzing simple reproduction, and he acknowledges her summary of other passages in Marx. On the other hand, he also notes passages in Marx as to the decisive importance of foreign trade to capitalist development (pp. 163–164). Having argued earlier in the book that Marx's intention in developing his schemes of extended reproduction without foreign trade was one of a "purely provisional character and therefore that the initial stage of the cognitive process must be followed by a second, concluding stage" (p. 30), Grossmann then attacks Luxemburg for her "postulating a gap in Marx's work", for which she "constructs a theory to fill in the so-called gap" (pp. 164–165). Yet, in an earlier, short commentary on crisis theory, Grossman (1922, p. 286) had himself abstracted from foreign trade – "the question of whether crises result from the essence of the economic mechanism under consideration can only be explained when we make this mechanism independent in our thoughts of the disturbing influences of foreign markets". And, in his review of Sismondi, Grossman (1924, pp. 9–10, 13, 15) had been supportive of Sismondi's abstraction from foreign trade, had considered Sismondi in a line with Quesnay and Marx on problems of social reproduction, and had argued that Marx also adopted an abstraction from foreign trade as part of his own methodology (even citing one of the same passages Luxemburg cites – see Grossman, 1924, p. 13, fn. 1, and Luxemburg, 1913, p. 331). So, what is wrong with Luxemburg following the implications of the same assumption? The answer is that Grossmann wants to establish Marx's crisis theory while still defending the schemes of extended reproduction, against Luxemburg who had demonstrated that the schemes cannot be defended as a starting point of analysis of accumulation. It boils down to an **assertion** of an error of Luxemburg's **without** analyzing Luxemburg's careful argumentation.

As an aside, we can note that Grossmann's work went on to use a model of Otto Bauer (1913) to develop his own theory of a breakdown of capitalism. Following a lead that the ratio of the accumulated portion of surplus value to the total surplus value is rising in Bauer's model, Grossmann showed that over a longer historical time than Bauer analyzed surplus value will be squeezed to the point of eventually prohibiting any capitalist consumption and even of any additional labor power being employed. Bauer had simply failed to follow his own model long enough to discover this inevitable consequence.

The demands for ever larger and larger constant capital, as the organic composition rises, overwhelms the surplus value appropriated. Bauer's model thus turns out to be a model of a breakdown of capitalist accumulation. Grossmann also elaborated the point algebraically (typos later being corrected by Trotman, see Howard and King, 1989, pp. 332–333), and as long as constant capital is growing at any rate greater than the rate for variable capital there will be a breakdown, the only issue being how long before the breakdown occurs. In other words, Grossmann was able to show a weakness in asserting the sustainability of accumulation of capital through a model such as Bauer's. Bauer's model, built to break the back of Luxemburg's argument, is very useful to Grossmann – as a non-Luxemburgist model of capitalist breakdown.<sup>10</sup>

Grossmann's legacy, for the issues raised in this article, is to continue the demolition of Luxemburg undertaken by Bukharin.

### III. “HER THEORY WAS WRONG”: COUNCIL COMMUNISTS AND ‘INDEPENDENT’ MARXISTS

Even writers sympathetic to Rosa Luxemburg's revolutionary leftism have been highly critical of her economic analysis. Almost no one has been convinced by her attempt to demonstrate that accumulation is impossible in a closed capitalist system.

Her theory was wrong.

(Howard & King, 1989, pp. 112 and 317).

After an initial 1913 reaction to Luxemburg's *Accumulation*, Anton Pannekoek (1934), a workers' council Marxist, returned to the issue twenty-one years later. He used an arithmetical example similar to the “second illustration” of extended accumulation in Marx (1885, p. 548ff) except that the organic composition is 4:1 in both sectors, rather than the 5:1 in Marx (indeed Pannekoek's example is easier to follow). The arithmetic scheme is elaborated in the Appendix to this paper. Pannekoek then concludes that Luxemburg is “mistaken” as all products can be sold within capitalism: “[A]ll the products are sold within capitalism itself . . . . Nor is it pointless: to produce, to sell products to each other, to consume, to produce more is the whole essence of capitalism . . . . There is no unsolved problem here which Marx overlooked” (pp. 64–65). It seems looking at such schemes is enough for him. And the portion of the statement referring to the essence of capitalism is indistinguishable from neoclassical economics in its absent of any reference to class. Neither does Pannekoek provide in his commentary an awareness that he ever understood Luxemburg's critique of Marx which depends decisively upon the class character of capitalism.

Pannekoek does go on to agree with Luxemburg regarding the misplaced emphasis on population growth in Bauer's critique, an issue we will need not take up but do note him concluding that "making population growth the regulator of accumulation was so contrary to the spirit of Marxian teaching that the sub-title of her anti-critique 'What the Epigones have done to Marxian Theory' was this time quite suitable" (p. 66).

Another workers' council Marxist Paul Mattick (1935, 1974, pp. 88ff, and 1978) undertook extensive discussion of Luxemburg. His later commentaries can be taken as the mature position, but in any case differences from the earlier are not very substantial. The 1974 one also includes discussion of Bukharin's specific criticism which had received no attention in the earlier Mattick.<sup>11</sup> Mattick begins by saying that Luxemburg wanted to scientifically prove the basis of imperialism in capitalist production (1974, p. 88) and by noting that the importance of her work "lay not so much in the explanation of imperialism as in the demonstration that capitalism has absolute, impassable limits, and that the more closely the system approaches them, the greater the social shocks will be" (p. 90). This is accurate enough, particularly since others have taken her work to be merely "instrumental" to her anti-imperialist politics and so, by implication, have tended to put off deeper analysis. Mattick, however, does continue by sustaining a dismissal of Luxemburg, not much in his own words but using the words of others (minus the polemics). He only provides a few quotations from her first part (i.e. pp. 117–119), while none at all from her second part on the "Historical Exposition of the Problem". Recall how Bukharin delimited his own attention to Luxemburg, albeit in a different manner. Similarly, Lenin, after the first two chapters, made no marginal notes within any of the remainder of Luxemburg's first part (see Zarembka, 2000, pp. 221–222). Lack of sufficient attention to the first part, basic to Luxemburg's argumentation, is being repeated by Mattick.<sup>12</sup>

Mattick shows awareness that, for Luxemburg, the problem is not directly one of production of surplus value, but rather of its realization, and that crises are "crises of overproduction, characterized by quantities of unsold goods". Mattick, however, immediately adds that such overproduction "had nothing to do with Marx's theory of accumulation" (1974, p. 90). Seemingly to demonstrate this disconnection from Marx, he proceeds to survey two of her leading critics, Bukharin (1924) and Bauer (1913).

Mattick reports that Bukharin had seen "the basis of Luxemburg's false theory in her identification of the accumulation of capital with that of money capital" (p. 92; also, p. 110), repeating what Mattick himself writes a few pages earlier that "capitalist accumulation, for Luxemburg, is 'the heaping up of money

capital' which presupposes the realization of the surplus value produced" (p. 89). Mattick even continues by elaborating Bukharin's point:

She imagined that the share of the surplus value that must be accumulated as additional capital must first be transformed into money capital already at hand within the system . . . Bukharin, however, pointed out that, like capital itself, surplus value appears in various forms: as commodities, as money, as means of production, and as labor power. For each of these the money form is not to be identified with the total surplus value in its various forms. Surplus value must go through its money phase, only not as a whole, at one time, but rather bit by bit . . . The total surplus value does not have to encounter a sum of money equivalent to it, although every commodity, in order to be realized, must be turned into money (pp. 92–93).

Mattick doesn't provide page citations to Luxemburg to substantiate Bukharin's reading. He doesn't provide page citation to Bukharin either, but we can find Bukharin saying, "the fact that the movement of the total social capital is *accompanied* by an accumulation of money capital (as Marx correctly stresses) in no way means that the accumulation of capital *is equivalent* to the accumulation of money capital, that is *identical* with the latter". While true for individual capitalists, "this in no way means that the total capitalist realizes his surplus value *in one transaction* by exchanging the commodity heap against a heap of gold of equivalent value at one stroke", which is an absurd "Rosaist" idea (Bukharin, 1924, pp. 194–195). Mattick is reformulating and repeating Bukharin – without his own critical attention.

Without further addressing these points raised regarding Luxemburg, Mattick goes on to tie Bukharin's own crisis theory to Lenin's and then shares Rosdolsky's (1968, pp. 472–483) view of the unfortunate similarity of Lenin's view to Tugan-Baranowsky's disproportionalities theory (see also Zarembka, 2000, Section II). The reader with an interest in Luxemburg must be left with the sense that Mattick wants to include Luxemburg in his discussion but his real interests are elsewhere.

The next page of Mattick's book (1974, p. 96) contains the only citations to the nine chapter, first part of Luxemburg's book, followed by a reporting on Bauer's critique of Luxemburg. Bauer's critique seems to interest Mattick more than Bukharin's, presumably corresponding to Bauer's tie-in to and Mattick's interest in Grossmann's work discussed in our previous section. Mattick first mentions Bauer's interest in population growth and, as Pannekoek, sides with Luxemburg who in this respect "stood completely on the terrain of Marx's theory, for which it is the mechanism of production and accumulation that adapts the number of employed workers to the valorization requirements of capital, and not accumulation that is adapted to population growth" (p. 99). Mattick also remarks on a few other points of contention. But he misses a

technical issue of Bauer's inappropriate transfer of units of value from Department II to Department I in Bauer's exposition attempting to demonstrate the possibility of realization. This important, albeit technical, issue is surveyed in Zarembka (2000, Section III) and repetition is unwarranted.

Mattick next turns to the issue of Marx's theoretical assumption of a fully capitalist world, the importance of which we mentioned in Section I above. Mattick hits upon the issue of contention by claiming that if such were indeed Marx's procedure it would argue against Luxemburg – "the reproduction schemes show that even under the conditions they assume, the circuit of capital is conceivable on an expanded scale" (p. 100). But he fails to explain this assertion! Luxemburg is denying most forcefully the accuracy of such a statement and Mattick is doing no more than asserting her supposed error in understanding Marx – but not analyzing her argumentation (for which she devoted much of her book of 450 pages). This failure is connected to Mattick's failure to even discuss the "technical" issue of Bauer's transferring value from one department to another. It seems that the problem with Mattick and many others<sup>13</sup> is that their understanding of Luxemburg gets undermined by the simplicity of mathematical equations and they miss issues of their connection to real material life. They think that if capitalist accumulation is "without regard for actual social needs or even for the valorization requirements of capital" (Mattick, p. 115), considerations of use-value can be obliterated. Such an omission is consistent with a failure to understand the depth of Luxemburg's critique for which the use-values being produced in an effort to produce and realize surplus value absolutely must be acknowledged.

Mattick (1978) does have an even later, but less accessible, review of Luxemburg's legacy and his discussion there of her *Accumulation of Capital* does have the virtue of expressing his own point of view directly. After providing a survey of issues around Marx's reproduction schemes and Luxemburg's impact on the discussion, a survey which is fair enough even if one can contest points here and there, Mattick then says that "her own solution comprises, in essence, no more than a misunderstanding of the relation between money and capital and a misreading of the Marxian text". He claims instead:

Although capitalism is indeed afflicted with difficulties in the sphere of circulation and therein in the realization of surplus-value, it is not here that Marx looked for, or found, the key to the understanding of capitalism's susceptibility to crises and to its inevitable end. Even on the assumption that there exists no problem at all with regard to the realization of surplus-value, capitalism finds its objective limits in those of the **production** of surplus-value.

According to Marx, capitalism's basic contradiction, from which spring all its other difficulties, is to be found in the value and surplus-value relations of capital production. It is the production of exchange-value in its monetary form, derived from the use-value form of labor-power, which produces, besides its own exchange-value equivalent, a surplus-value for the capitalists. The drive for exchange-value turns into the accumulation of capital, which

manifests itself in a growth of capital invested in means of production relatively faster than that invested in labor-power. While this process expands the capitalist system, through the increasing productivity of labor associated with it, it also tends to reduce the rate of profit on capital, as that part of capital invested in labor-power – which is the only source of surplus-value – diminishes relative to the total social capital.

In other words, Mattick is supporting a falling-rate-of-profit theory of crises and re-iterating Grossmann's focus on an increasing shortage of surplus value as capitalism develops. He claims this against Luxemburg. Yet any possibilities of crises due to a falling rate of profit may or may not be compounded with possibilities due to realization problems and really don't affect Luxemburg's argumentation. If a falling-rate-of-profit theory can be defended (which is outside the purview of our discussion), Luxemburg is not harmed. In fact, given that a falling-rate-of-profit theory in Marx depends upon a rising organic composition of capital while Marx **assumes** a fixed organic composition in his reproduction schemes, Luxemburg cannot be read otherwise than **abstracting from** (rather than denying) issues of falling profit rates in her attempt to understand problems of realization in Marx's schemes.

Be that as it may, Mattick also thinks that he can dismiss Luxemburg's argument:

[F]or Rosa Luxemburg capitalism cannot exist at all, except through the absorption of its surplus-value by pre-capitalist economies. This implies the absurdity that these backward nations have a surplus in monetary form large enough to accommodate the surplus-value of the capitalistically advanced countries. But as already mentioned, this wrong idea was the unreflected consequence of Rosa Luxemburg's false notion that the whole of the surplus-value, earmarked for accumulation, must yield an equivalent in money form, in order to be realized as capital. Actually, of course, capital takes on the form of money at times and at other times that of commodities of all descriptions – all being expressed in money terms without simultaneously assuming the money form. Only a small and decreasing part of the capitalist wealth has to be in money form; the larger part, although expressed in terms of money, remains in its commodity form and as such allows for the realization of surplus-value an additional capital (pagination not available).

Such argumentation again goes back to Bukharin distortion, and Mattick's acceptance, that for Luxemburg accumulation of capital, is accumulation of money capital. Remember that Bukharin tries to claim such an interpretation as hers by selectively choosing one particular passage which she wrote while he ignores others. Furthermore, recall that, when we summarized Luxemburg in Section I above, we did not need to rely upon a forced equating of accumulation of capital with accumulation of money capital.

Among independent Marxists, Sweezy (1942) and Rosdolsky (1968) share one criticism of Luxemburg. Taking accumulation to mean employing

additional workers and adding to constant capital (p. 181), Sweezy states that Luxemburg makes one overriding error: "in discussing expanded reproduction she implicitly retains the assumptions of simple reproduction. The dogma, which she never questions for a moment, that the consumption of workers can realize no surplus value implies that the total amount of variable capital, and hence also the consumption of workers, must remain fixed and constant as in simple reproduction" (p. 204). Echoing Sweezy but without further elaboration, Rosdolsky refers to Luxemburg's "basically incorrect critique of Marx's theory of reproduction [which] continually fell back on the presuppositions of simple reproduction in the analysis of extended reproduction" (Vol. 2, pp. 491–492). Yet, Sweezy is making a basic conceptual mistake. For he explains his passage just cited by saying that when additional variable capital, resulting from accumulation, "is spent by workers it realizes a part of the surplus value which has the physical form of consumption goods. Since Rosa Luxemburg did not understand this, it seemed to her that consumption could not increase within the framework of capitalism."

Sweezy simply fails to understand that **there is no such a thing in Marx as increased consumption by workers as any realization of surplus value**. Rather, such increased consumption would either be from more workers employed, producing additional surplus value, or from simply increased variable capital  $v$  for each worker (setting aside technological change in production). In other words, if workers get more they get more, more  $v$ ; period.<sup>14</sup> Luxemburg very explicitly includes drawing in more workers through proletarianizations – as a solution to the theoretical difficulty in Marx. Any increased wages is not a gift from the capitalist class but an outcome of the hostile struggle between capital and wage-labor (see, for example, Lapides, 1998). It is correct that Luxemburg did not consider a cheapening of consumer goods for the working class, consequent of technological progress, as having the potential to raise the standard of living of workers. But this absence comes directly out of her Marxism that cheapening goods consumed by workers is itself designed to **lower**  $v$  and raise surplus value (i.e. exactly the production of relative surplus value in Marx's first volume of *Capital*), and not to improve the lives of the exploited class. Thus, she says, "according to the standpoint of the capitalist . . . workers are not, like others, customers of their commodities, but simply the labor force, whose maintenance out of part of its own produce is an unfortunate necessity, reduced to the minimum society allows" (Luxemburg, 1921, p. 55). For Luxemburg, technical change simply raises the rate of exploitation of the workers (pp. 98–99; also elsewhere).

Rosdolsky's critique goes a bit beyond Sweezy. He does express appreciation for Luxemburg's introduction of the implications of technical progress for

Marx's schemes (pp. 495–496). However, after favorably noting Grossmann's explanation for her "mistakes" (her supposed, unconscious influence from Tugan-Baranowsky and Hilferding discussed above), Rosdolsky also claims that Luxemburg did not sufficiently understand the influence of Hegel on Marx's thought and therefore did not sufficiently understand Marx's methodology. Specifically, she "misunderstood the role allotted to the model of pure capitalist society in Marx's work. She did not grasp that it represented a heuristic device . . . The methodological intent of [Marx's] procedure is clear. If, even under the strictest assumptions, i.e. in the abstract model of a pure capitalist society, it is possible for surplus-value to be realized and for capital to accumulate – within certain limits – then there is no theoretical need to have recourse to external factors, such as foreign trade, the existence of a third person, or state intervention. In this sense, Marx's model completely stood the test." (pp. 492–493, see also pp. 63–72 for a more elaborated discussion of the same point). Excuse me! Hegel or no Hegel, didn't Luxemburg precisely spend pages upon pages showing in Section One of her *Accumulation* that Marx's model does not pass this test and that Marx himself was somewhat aware of difficulties? Luxemburg did stay with a theoretical abstraction of a purely capitalist economy – until its weakness regarding accumulation of capital could no longer be avoided. She didn't duck the issue; rather, after analysis, she concluded that a "realization of the surplus value outside the only two existing classes of society appears as indispensable as it looks impossible" and the analysis by Marx in the second volume of *Capital* "offers no way out" (1913, p. 165). Near the beginning of Section Three she even pulls together a series of quotations from Marx to show that Marx was consciously delimiting himself to a purely capitalist economy (see her pp. 331–333). **Luxemburg turns to a serious analysis of the role of a non-capitalist environment only after discovering the weakness in Marx's presentation.**

Evenitsky (1963) tries to summarize Marx's reproduction schemes and claims that if Rosa Luxemburg had known of Lenin's (1893) first work she might have been saved from writing "a lot of nonsense" (p. 170, fn. 22). In this remark, he forgot that Lenin had not there dealt with accumulation but had, like Luxemburg later, considered penetration of non-capitalist relations of production. In any case, Evenitsky is as weak as Pannekoek in confusing how to relate a mathematical model to the underlying economic problem. Evenitsky, to his credit, is able to see a connection between focus on the theoretical concept of a rising organic composition of capital and the Soviet practice of emphasis on Department I over Department II (pp. 170–175).

Kowalik (1966 and 1987) has an academic reading of Luxemburg which deserves notice here. In the later article – for the *The New Palgrave* dictionary, a quick but fair survey is provided (pp. 248–249 and 251–52). But he comments that



“Luxemburg promised much more than she was able to deliver . . . [S]he did not succeed in transforming the schemes of reproduction into a form which would suit her purpose” (p. 249). This remark implies that she could only have succeeded if she had successfully mathematized into new schemes her conclusions. Yet it does lead Kowalik to be able to interpret her as attempting to solve the problem that conditions of production and realization are distinct, that “pure capitalism provides by itself too weak a basis for rapid economic growth”, and that it was Michal Kalecki who was “the most successful in taking up problems posed by Rosa Luxemburg and solving them correctly” (p. 250). This last is an assertion that would take us too far afield. In the same dictionary, a related entry by Desai (1987) has the remark that “the most searching critical analysis of Marx’s scheme came from Rosa Luxemburg” (p. 340), but he does not offer as clear a statement of Luxemburg’s thought as does Kowalik’s entry. Another dictionary of Marxist thought has an entry on reproduction schemes which includes the statement that for Luxemburg the schemes show demand deficiency, but that “by generalizing Marx’s simple numerical examples it is easy to see that the growing demand originates inside the two Departments themselves” (Giussani, 1983, p. 474). Such a statement is indistinguishable from analyzes such as Pannekoek’s.

Tarback (1972) offers the “Editor’s Introduction” to the English translation of Luxemburg’s *Anti-Critique* and Bukharin’s reply. He sums up Luxemburg’s criticism of Marx’s reproduction scheme by saying that “once one begins to remove some of the restrictive assumptions and looks at capitalism as it actually operates, defects in the scheme begin to emerge, the most serious being that Marx assumed no technical change in his schemes” (p. 21). Tarback doesn’t cite a source but seems to be relying on a several page passage beginning a few pages into her chapter “Contradictions within the Diagram of Enlarged Reproduction”, starting with her remark that “the diagram disregards the increasing productivity of labor” (Luxemburg, 1913, p. 335). If so, her passage comes **after** her exposition of the main difficulty:

There can be no doubt, therefore, that Marx wanted to demonstrate the process of accumulation in a society consisting exclusively of workers and capitalists, under the universal and exclusive domination of the capitalist mode of production. On this assumption, however, his diagram does not permit of any other interpretation than that of production for production’s sake (p. 333).

. . . In the process of capitalization, the same technical foundation [is] maintained for the additional capital as it was for the original capital . . . Yet the upshot of all this is not accumulation of capital but an increasing of production of producer goods to no purpose whatever (pp. 334–335).

In other words, Luxemburg did not need to discuss production of relative surplus value in order to present her critique of Marx: the inclusion of technical change,

while important for a more complete theory, is ancillary to the main point. We might note that others have not attempted to interpret Luxemburg's basic point in the manner Tarbuck attempts and it seems fair to conclude that Tarbuck's summation is wide of the mark.

Kuehne's (1972) survey of dynamics in the Marxian system includes a number of comments on Luxemburg's *Accumulation*, although none referring to her *Anti-Critique*. Most are scattered comments, and the more important center upon the relative weight of Department I over Department II (pp. 89–90 and 104–109; see also our Appendix) rather than issues of realization. However, he does assert (and it is not more than that), “she undoubtedly erred in the very heart of her growth theory, for she assumed . . . that capitalism could not keep growing on the strength of its own resources” (p. 108). Rather than **assuming** such a point, Luxemburg's effort was to **prove** the insufficiency of an internal market to sustain capitalism. After going on to claim that she was proved wrong by Bauer, Bukharin and Sweezy, Kuehne adds that “the great post-war boom of ‘late capitalism’ . . . clearly demonstrated that industrial countries, and not semi-feudal states or under-developed ‘third persons’, are the best customers of industrial countries” (p. 108). Ultimately, of course, this empirical question must indeed be addressed, recognizing that Luxemburg's theoretical points can be correct for an earlier stage of capitalism while necessary theoretical modifications corresponding to a later stage may be required.

At the beginning of this section, we cite Howard and King's complete dismissal of Luxemburg's *Accumulation of Capital*, but it does require some further elaboration. Her *Accumulation* is in part, they say, a continuation of the struggle beginning around 1898 over Eduard Bernstein's revisionism.<sup>15</sup> After they summarize other parts of her position, they come to “her chief error” (p. 109), her error in thinking that capitalists cannot be sufficient mutual customers for each other's products to avoid a realization problem. “Over and over again it has been urged against her that capitalists can, do and must constitute each other's customers [sufficient to avoid a realization problem, P.Z.], and that demand for that part of the social product which is destined for accumulation comes from capitalists intent upon increasing their employment of constant and variable capital . . . The capitalist is motivated by profit, not by concern for the growth of consumption, and if endlessly increasing the production of machines which produce machines for the production of machines appears profitable, there is no reason why it should ever cease.” (pp. 112–113) Through 1897, Lenin might have written the same (see Zarembka, 2000, Section II.A). However, in *Volume 3 of Capital*, while discussing the turnover of merchants' capital, Marx (1894, p. 305) had noted that “constant capital is never produced for its own sake but solely because more of it is needed in spheres

of production whose products go into individual consumption". In his *Development of Capitalism in Russia* (and elsewhere in 1899), Lenin, therefore, calls attention to Marx's remark and tells the reader that

The department of social production which produces means of production has . . . to grow faster than that producing articles of consumption. For capitalism . . . the growth of the home market is to a certain extent 'independent' of the growth of personal consumption, and takes place mostly on account of productive consumption [consumption of means of production]. But it would be a mistake to understand this 'independence' as meaning that productive consumption is entirely divorced from personal consumption: the former can and must increase faster than the latter (and there its 'independence' ends), but it goes without saying that, in the last analysis, productive consumption is always bound up with personal consumption. (1899b, pp. 54–55; see also 1899d for further elaboration.)

In other words, production cannot be flat-out divorced from consumption. One simply cannot make the short-circuited rebuttal against Luxemburg which Howard and King attempt. One must carry forward the analysis by (somehow) bringing in the role of consumption. They fail to do so; Luxemburg does not.

#### IV. A LANCE FROM DUNAYEVSKAYA'S HEGELIAN HUMANISM

Raya Dunayevskaya's writings sustain a Hegelian humanist interpretation of Marx and understanding her cannot be divorced from that context. Dunayevskaya (1982) argues that none of the post-Marx Marxists, Engels included, understood the importance for Marx of Hegel. While Lenin in his 1914–1915 reading of Hegel represented a major step in the correct direction, he, nevertheless, failed insofar as he did not publish his understanding and did not carry the importance of Hegel into the issues of organization for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. While Dunayevskaya demonstrates a great deal of respect for Luxemburg's political work, including women's issues, she roundly criticizes Luxemburg's "greatest theoretical work" (p. 32), the work on accumulation. Devoting a full chapter to *The Accumulation of Capital*, she rarely offers a supportive comment. Luxemburg, who, says Dunayevskaya, showed little interest in philosophical questions, has offended Dunayevskaya's deep Hegelian approach (see pp. 63, 115–116, 156, 176).

##### *A. Dunayevskaya's Marxist-Humanism through an Althusserian Lens*

A remarkable aspect of Dunayevskaya is the extent to which her overall interpretation of Marx is the mirror opposite of Althusser's. Althusser, of course, is a major proponent arguing that the tendency of Marx's theoretical work was

away from Hegel, that Marx did not in his late work sustain the importance of Hegel – Hegel had been a detour for Marx on his road to establishing a science. For the purposes of this paper, we will delineate some of the lines of demarcation between Dunayevskaya and Althusser in order to provide a framework for understanding Dunayevskaya's rejection of Luxemburg's *Accumulation*. This background is important since Dunayevskaya's rejection does not follow the paths laid out by others discussed in our prior sections. Commentary on Althusser himself will not be much needed since our purposes are only to better understand the character of Dunayevskaya's critique of Luxemburg. And, of course, many issues between Althusser and Dunayevskaya are not included, even what biography of Marx should be read – where Althusser (1965a, p. 53) recommends Mehring's, who happened to have been a close comrade of Luxemburg's (who in turn wrote, upon Mehring's request, the material in that biography explaining the importance of *Volumes 2 and 3 of Capital*), while Dunayevskaya claims that that biography "stinks" (p. xxvi).

Althusser himself does not comment on Dunayevskaya. His substantive comments on Luxemburg, apart from recognizing her as one of the giants of Marxism, are quite limited, but suggestive that for him the decisive issues between Dunayevskaya and Luxemburg would not actually be over humanism: "The themes of revolutionary humanism and historicism emerged from the German left, initially from Rosa Luxemburg and Mehring, and then, after the 1917 Revolution, from a whole series of theoreticians, some of whom, like Korsch, were lost later, while others, like Lukacs, played an important part, or even, like Gramsci, a very important part. We know the terms in which Lenin judged this movement of 'leftist' reaction against the mechanistic conventionality of the Second International: he condemned its theoretical fables and its political tactics (cf. *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*)". Althusser also refers to humanism's political effects, including "some of Rosa Luxemburg's theses on imperialism and the disappearance of the laws of 'political economy' in the socialist regime" (1965b, pp. 120, 141).

One point in common between Dunayevskaya and Althusser is the great scientific advance that each believes Marx's work represents. Dunayevskaya says that Marx discovered in 1844 "a new continent of thought and revolution". It was driven by "Marx's concept of Alienated Labor which broke through all criticism [of bourgeois society]. *That* discovery changed all else. *That* 'self-clarification,' stretching from April to August [1844], disclosed the inner connection between philosophy and economics, philosophy and politics, subjective and objective; it created a new beginning, a new totality of theory and practice".<sup>16</sup> The discovery was sustained by a reformulation of Hegel's "negation of the negation", which Marx had called 'a new Humanism' "

(pp. 122, 125, 49–50 fn. 33, respectively). Althusser could agree with this interpretation by Dunayevskaya – for the period **before** 1845; indeed, such a position of early Marx is summarized by him (1965a, pp. 225–226).

For Althusser (1968, p. 42), it is from 1845 that the really great contribution by Marx is begun, the “continent of knowledge” of the science of history, comparable to continents of knowledge established by the Greeks for mathematics and Galileo for physics. This continent centers on a set of new and fundamental theoretical concepts with “quite new meaning and function: mode of production, relations of production, productive forces, social classes rooted in the unity of the productive forces and relations or production, ruling class/oppressed class, ruling ideology/oppressed ideology, class struggle, etc.” (1973, pp. 108–109). It appears **after** the *1844 Manuscripts*, which, Althusser says, rested on human essence, alienation and alienated labor. Althusser’s continent is thus quite distinct from Dunayevskaya’s. Marx’s scientific breakthrough included breaking with humanism, i.e. “Marx broke radically with every theory that based history and politics on an essence of man” (1965a, p. 227). While Althusser (1972) acknowledges considerable references to alienation up to Marx’s unpublished *Grundrisse* of 1857–1858 (Althusser actually had dated Marx’s “break” in 1845, but subsequently moved it forward in time into the early 1860s), he describes a definite tendency for “alienation” to disappear as Marx matures intellectually. With alienation appearing “much more rarely” (p. 70) in *Capital, Volume 1*, Althusser says:

[L]ook at Marx’s texts, look at the birth and development of his scientific concepts, and . . . you will at the same time see the gradual disappearance of these two philosophical categories inherited from the past and still subsisting as remnants, known as *alienation* and the *negation of the negation*. Now in fact, the more we advance in time, the more these categories disappear. *Capital* speaks only once of the negation of the negation in explicit terms. It is true that Marx several times uses the *term* “alienation”. But all that disappears in Marx’s later texts and in Lenin. Completely. We could therefore simply say: what is important is the *tendency*: and Marx’s scientific work does *tend* to get rid of these philosophical categories (p. 67).

Regarding the Hegelian ‘negation of the negation’, the particular passage at stake is at the end of the chapter “Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation”, a chapter which itself may have been intended by Marx to be the very last chapter of *Volume 1* except for a necessity to deceive censors of Marx’s book (see Rubel in Marx, 1872–1875, p. 1224, fn. 2). The passage reads: “capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation. It is the negation of negation” (Marx, 1867, p. 715). The first negation is the turning of laborers into proletarians and their means of labor into constant capital. What is being suggested is one negation resulting from

the revolutionary transformation into the capitalist mode of production. The next negation is the subsequent revolutionary transformation into a socialized mode of production in which the expropriators have been expropriated.

Dunayevskaya considers the very concept of negation of the negation, saved by Marx out of Hegel's dialectic, as "*the* creative force and Reason of dialectic methodology . . . [D]ialectical philosophy was the basis of the *totality* of Marx's work, not only in philosophy but in practice, and in both politics and economics." (p. xxiii). Thus, for that passage on negation of the negation in *Volume 1*, she says,

The overriding truth [of all three volumes of *Capital*] is that the only thing that could possibly uproot capitalism, the revolt of the workers, destroys what is '*the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation*', the endless growth of constant capital at the expense of variable, and with it the unemployed army . . . Negation of the negation, far from being rhetoric, is the actual summation of the whole history of capitalism (pp. 150–151).

Read immediately, the passage can suggest that everything in *Capital* boils down, for her, to an never-ending growth of constant capital relative to variable capital, rising  $c/v$ , and its concomitant rising of the reserve army of labor. The resulting slag must be overthrown by working class revolt. Of course, we must take the importance of a rising  $c/v$  as her understanding, and it is also consistent with comments by her regarding the domination in capitalism of dead labor over living labor. On the other hand, we doubt that she really means that the capitalist mode of production can be boiled down to just this.

Althusser simply considers the single use by Marx in *Capital* of 'negation of the negation' as either a metaphor or a late residual of his early Hegelian thought and in neither case to be treated seriously. He notes that instead of saying something like: "man makes history, in transcending it, by the 'negation of the negation', [we] could say that man makes history by 'transforming' it, etc. Wouldn't that be more simple?" (1972, pp. 41–42).

Even the actual reading of *Volume 1* of *Capital* represents a divergence between Dunayevskaya and Althusser. Dunayevskaya comments that Stalin broke the dialectical structure of Marx's work by ordering that Chapter 1 not be taught. Stalin thereby perverted Marx's concept of history "from the class struggle in the specifically capitalistic world of commodity production to a Law of Value that supposedly existed before capitalism and will continue to exist under socialism". She then connects Althusser to Stalin by recalling that Althusser had advised workers "*not* to begin reading *Capital* with Chapter One" and by claiming he was "repeating Stalin's 1943 *order*" (p. 142 and fn. 14, adding that "Prof. Althusser never stopped trying to eliminate Hegel from Marx").<sup>17</sup> It is correct that Althusser finds Hegelian residuals particularly in the first chapter

of *Capital*; however, it is not correct to say that Althusser recommends not reading Chapter One. Rather, says Althusser, “the greatest difficulties, theoretical or otherwise, which are obstacles to an easy reading of *Capital* Volume One are unfortunately (or fortunately) concentrated at the very beginning of Volume One, to be precise, in its first Part, which deals with ‘Commodities and Money’ [so that] it is impossible to begin (even to begin) to understand Part I until you have read and re-read the whole of Volume One, starting with Part II” (Althusser, 1969, pp. 79–80). After reading later parts, says Althusser, “begin to read Part I (Commodities and Money) with infinite caution, knowing that it will always be extremely difficult to understand, even after several readings of the other Parts, without the help of a certain number of deeper explanations” (p. 85). While the few references to alienation in *Volume I* are mostly in Part I, Althusser also mentions other difficulties with an Hegelian origin: the use of the word ‘value’ in ‘use-value’, ‘negation of the negation’, fetishism (pp. 90–92).

### B. Dunayevskaya's Attempt to Demolish Luxemburg's Accumulation

**Interpretation of Marx on Accumulation:** As background to her analysis of Luxemburg's *Accumulation of Capital*, Dunayevskaya first offers her own interpretation of Marx:

Since the publication of volume 2 of *Capital* in 1885, the pivot of the dispute on expanded reproduction has been Marx's diagrammatic presentation of *how* surplus value is realized in an ideal capitalist society. It is necessary to turn to that first. Marx does not let us forget that his premise is that of a closed society, which is capitalistic . . .

[W]hile Marx excludes foreign trade, he nevertheless places his society in the *environment* of the world market. These are the conditions of the problem.

. . . Marx wanted to answer [in addition to exposing an error of Adam Smith] the underconsumptionist argument that continued capital accumulation was impossible because of the impossibility of ‘realizing’ surplus value, i.e. of selling . . .

In disproving the underconsumption theory, Marx demonstrates that there is no *direct* connection between production and consumption (pp. 33–34).

We will deal below with her comment on the world-market environment. As to Marx's wanting to disprove the underconsumption argument, the main underconsumptionist before Marx was Sismondi (Malthus to a lesser extent) and Sismondi is not cited by Marx in any of the part of *Volume II* discussing the reproduction schemes. Furthermore, there is no other direct confirmation that Marx is here struggling to oppose underconsumptionism, rather than simply wanting to describe and analyze the circulation of total social capital under conditions of simple and extended reproduction.

Dunayevskaya goes on:

To illustrate the process of accumulation, or expanded reproduction, Marx divides social production into main departments – Department I, production of means of production, and Department II, production of means of consumption. The division is symptomatic of the class division of society. Marx **categorically refused** to divide social production into more than two departments . . . [as] there are only two classes and *hence* only two decisive divisions of social production . . . The relationship between the two branches is not merely a technical one. It is rooted in the class relationship between the worker and the capitalist (p. 34).

The ‘categorical’ refusal she alleges is not obvious. First, Dunayevskaya doesn’t cite a source for her remark. Second, when Marx was earlier working on the schemes of reproduction, at one point he divided society into hundreds of branches until he found out that he wasn’t accomplishing anything important (see Oakley, 1985, pp. 214–226 and the indicated citations to Marx, 1905a). Third, Dunayevskaya seems to forget or ignore that whether there are two, three, or hundreds of branches producing distinct use-values, all require constant capital and variable capital; that the number of branches need not be associated with the separation of constant capital from variable capital within each branch. In other words, associating a two-department division to the class relation of capital to wage-labor is a stretch.

Continuing with an attempt to be rid the issue of markets, Dunayevskaya says,

[F]undamental to Marx’s whole conception [and cutting] through the whole tangle of markets[,] Marx’s point is that the bodily form of value predetermines the destination of commodities. Iron is not consumed by people but by steel; sugar is not consumed by machines but by people . . . In the capitalist economic order, means of production forms the greater of the two departments of social production. And *hence* also of the ‘market’ . . .

It is impossible to have the slightest comprehension of the economic laws of capitalist production without being oppressively aware of the role of the material form of constant capital . . . In order to produce ever greater quantities of products, more means of production are necessary. That, and not the ‘market’, is the *differentia specifica* of expanded reproduction.

. . . Therefore, concludes Marx, the whole complex question of the conditions of expanded reproduction can be reduced to the following: can the surplus *product* in which the surplus value is incorporated go *directly* (without first being sold) into further production? Marx’s answer is: ‘It is not needed that the latter (means of production) be sold; they can *in nature* again enter into new production’ (pp. 35–36, quoting Marx at end).

Dunayevskaya has the annoying habit of quoting her own translations into English from Russian translations, even when the original language is German, without providing neither comparable standard translations nor even pagination other than the Russian. Sometimes this author could not locate the passage cited, to know exactly where she is working. In this case, however, the quotation at the end to Marx must be<sup>18</sup> a passage in *Theories of Surplus Value, Part II*. The text, in a



standard translation, reads that “machine-building machines . . . need not be sold but can re-enter the new production in kind, as constant capital” (Marx, 1905b, pp. 487–488). ‘In kind’ (corresponding to her ‘in nature’) has no italics. More importantly, Dunayevskaya relabels “machine-building machines” as the entire category, “means of production”. The sleight of hand is even more apparent simply reading the titling of this subsection, “The Direct Transformation of a Part of Surplus-Value into Constant Capital – a Characteristic Peculiar to Accumulation in Agriculture and the Machine-building Industry”. This titling clearly shows that we are dealing with a special case, a subset of all means of production. Dunayevskaya wants us to think that the market is not an issue, not from a general statement of Marx’s, but from a special case (to which she does not alert her reader)!

Having noted that Dunayevskaya has in no way proven that Marx was unconcerned with the market when addressing accumulation, let us nevertheless follow her onward. Dunayevskaya’s summation of extended reproduction reads,

It is not ‘people’ who realize the greater part of surplus value; it is realized through the constant expansion of constant capital . . . . The whole problem of the disputed volume 2 is to make it apparent that realization is not a question of the market, but of *production* (p. 36, paragraphing not indicated).

In other words, not “capitalists” – persons – realize most surplus value; produced means of production is “realized” in production itself, in ever expansion of constant capital. It is “realized” (if the word makes sense when markets are placed to one side), can we say, inhumanly?

**Critique of Luxemburg:** Now for Dunayevskaya’s explicit critique of Luxemburg. First, Dunayevskaya claims that Marx did not delimit himself to a fully-capitalist **world** but rather to a fully-capitalist, **isolated nation**. In this regard, Dunayevskaya is repeating Otto Bauer to whom Luxemburg had provided her own answer (which seemed to have no effect on Dunayevskaya, although she read it). Luxemburg’s explanation is worth reproducing as it provides Luxemburg’s understanding of Marx, whom she finds correct in his intentions:

Marx presupposes the *real tendency* of capitalist society. He assumes that the state of total and universal rule of capitalism has already been reached, that highest development of the world market and world economy which capital and every present economic and political development is *in fact* heading for. Thus, Marx is placing his investigation on the tracks of the real historical tendency of development, whose final goal he takes as already reached. Scientifically speaking, this method is quite correct and, as I have shown in my book, completely sufficient for the investigation of the accumulation of individual capital, even if, as I believe, it becomes incorrect and misleading when applied to the main problem: the accumulation of aggregate social capital (1921, p. 137).

In other words, says Luxemburg, ignore issues of an outside arena for the capitalist society and examine implications for Marx's scheme of extended reproduction. If we find a problem (Luxemburg does), perhaps we can also find the solution. If no problem results, then analysis could proceed on to other issues. This approach seems unobjectionable.

Secondly, Dunayevskaya claims that, for Luxemburg, the organic composition of capital  $c/v$  is "merely 'capitalist language' of the general productivity of labor" and therefore Luxemburg deprives "the carefully isolated  $c/v$  relationship of its class character." "The next inevitable stage is to divest the *material* form of capitalism of *its* class character. Where Marx makes the relationship between Department I, producing means of production, and Department II, producing means of consumption, reflect the *class* relationship inherent in  $c/v$ , Luxemburg . . . speaks of the 'branches of production' as if it were a purely technical term!" (p. 38). We don't know exactly where Luxemburg refers to "capitalist language" in connection with  $c/v$ . And Marx had not objected in principle to examining many branches, only that, for a specific problem at hand, it has "not helped us at all to shift through nearly 800 branches of production" (1905a, p. 122). But no matter. We have already said that identifying  $c/v$  directly to the class relation is a stretch.

Thirdly, we come to markets in Luxemburg. Dunayevskaya says that, for Marx, "it is production that determines the market. Luxemburg, on the other hand, finds herself in a position where [she] makes the market determine production. Once Luxemburg eliminates the fundamental Marxian distinction of means of production and means of consumption as indicative of a class relationship, she is compelled to look for the market in the bourgeois sense of 'effective demand' " (p. 39). Dunayevskaya seems to forget that use-values produced in the consumption-goods Department II is a department for consumption needs of **two** classes, capitalists and workers; that the use-values produced in that department go to capitalists and workers in each of the two departments. There is no one-to-one relationship of departments of production to social classes.

Dunayevskaya hurries onward: "That the 'consumed part of constant capital' is not consumed personally, but *productively*, seems to have escaped Luxemburg's attention . . . The consumed part of constant capital and the new investments in capital are *realized through production*" (p. 40). Dunayevskaya is returning again to Department I's production of means of production having its own outlet as constant capitals for Departments I and II; no questions need be asked. Production for the sake of production; rising  $c/v$  absorbs new production; no more questions need be asked. No need to remind the reader of Marx's statement (cited by Lenin in 1899a, p. 59; repeated in 1899b, p. 55 – text which

Dunayevskaya herself had translated from Russian to English;<sup>19</sup> repeated once more in 1899d, p. 163):

[Individual] consumption definitely limits [productive consumption], since constant capital is never produced for its own sake but solely because more of it is needed in spheres of production whose products go into individual consumption (Marx, 1894, p. 305).

No need to remind the reader of another passage in Marx (which Lenin, 1899a, p. 58, had not missed), where Marx refuses to reduce realization to just a problem in the sphere of production:

The conditions of direct exploitation, and those of realizing it, are not identical. They diverge not only in place and time, but also logically. The first are only limited by the productive power of society, the latter by the proportional relation of the various branches of production and the consumer power of society . . . [T]he more productiveness develops, the more it finds itself at variance with the narrow basis on which the conditions of consumption rest (Marx, 1894, pp. 244–245).

Dunayevskaya's position, vis-à-vis Luxemburg, reminds us of Howard and King's rejection of Luxemburg, summarized at the end of our prior section (which in turn is similar to some others before them). However, Howard and King do not reject the role of the market. They (and others) rather argue that necessary "customers" (i.e. capitalists) are there to realize ever increasing production of means of production, without worrying about any connection to consumption. By focusing on rising  $c/v$  and also away from markets, Dunayevskaya drives us into production and only production for her interpretation of Marx's schemes of reproduction. Why? Perhaps because alienation of labor is in production and, in her view, Marx's concept of alienation "broke through all criticism" of bourgeois society. To allow Luxemburg to focus on markets would be to allow Luxemburg to recognize that **people** buy and sell. To stay in production and out of markets is to try to sustain that "it is not 'people' who realize the greater part of surplus value; it is realized through the constant expansion of constant capital". It is to reaffirm a point she makes elsewhere in her book,

Economics is a matter not only of the economic laws of the breakdown of capitalism, but of the strife between the worker and the machine against dead labor's domination over living labor, beginning with *hearing* the worker's voice, which had been stifled 'in the storm and stress of the process of production' (p. 140).

To then "negate" this "negation" (alienation) is her humanist revolution. Along the way, she must reread Marx and even read what is not there.

And, if all this is not enough problem for Dunayevskaya's argument, there is a punch line. Marx's schemes of reproduction do **not** include a rising  $c/v$ !

## V. THE REVOLUTIONARY GETS AN ASSIST: JOAN ROBINSON

One-half century ago Joan Robinson (1951) wrote the introduction to the English translation of Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital*. Robinson was one of the most important leaders of the Cambridge (U.K.) critique of neoclassical economics and of its capital theory particularly. She took Marx seriously, even if she was not a Marxist and few Marxists would be satisfied with her rendering of Marx's economics. Robinson tried to understand *The Accumulation of Capital*, mostly out of respect but perhaps also as a preparation (conscious or not) for her own work in capital theory, including a 1956 book of the same title as Luxemburg's. In her summary of Luxemburg, Robinson introduces issues Marxist economists often avoid when focusing on issues considered of more fundamental concern. They are worth more thought.

In trying to understand Luxemburg, Robinson cuts into remarks to the effect that capitalists can endlessly buy and sell more and more means of production to and from each other (as one example of such thinking, "if endlessly increasing the production of machines which produce machines for the production of machines appears profitable, there is no reason why it should ever cease" – Howard & Wolff, 1989, p. 113). Let us see how Robinson simplifies and gets right to the point. First she makes a critical remark about Luxemburg missing the savings and investment problem highlighted in Keynesian economics: Luxemburg "does not admit the savings and investment problem, for she takes it for granted that each individual act of saving out of surplus is accompanied by a corresponding amount of real investment, and that every piece of investment is financed by saving out of surplus of the same capitalist who makes it" (p. 20). But then Robinson goes on to explain and appreciate the basic problem Luxemburg raises:

What she appears to be concerned with is rather the inducement to invest. What motive have the capitalists for enlarging their stock of real capital [means of production, P.Z.]? How do they know that there will be demand for the increased output of goods which the new capital will produce [actually, labor produces. P.Z.], so that they can 'capitalize' their surplus [value, P.Z.] in a profitable form? . . .

Needless to say, our author does not formulate the problem of inducement to invest in modern terminology, and the ambiguities and contradictions in her exposition have left ample scope for her critics to represent her theory as irredeemable nonsense. But the most natural way to read it is also the clearest. Investment can take place in an ever-accumulating stock of capital only if the capitalists are assured of an ever-expanding market for the goods which the capital can produce. On this reading, the statement of the problem leads straightforwardly to the solution propounded in the third Section of this book.

... [T]he numerical examples [in Marx's schemes], as she shows, fail to help. And this is in the nature of the case, for (in modern jargon) the examples deal with *ex post* quantities, while she is looking for *ex ante* prospects of increased demand for commodities. If accumulation does take place, demand will absorb output, as the model shows, but what is it that makes accumulation take place? (Robinson, 1951, pp. 20–21.)

Even if Robinson writes of “capital” instead of “means of production” and she thinks “capital will produce” rather than labor, even if “motive” and “*ex ante* prospects” ring of subjectivism, she sees more clearly than many the major problem that Luxemburg found with Marx's *Volume 2* schemes of extended reproduction.

For nearly a century the problem Luxemburg raised has been almost always swept under the bed so that Marxists can rest in comfort, secure in the knowledge that Marx had said what needed to be said. Attention to her work on accumulation of capital needs re-igniting.

## NOTES

1. Consumption goods include subsistence needs of the workers employed in the two departments as well as the subsistence needs and luxury consumption of capitalists in the two departments. Sometimes a Marxist economist will add a third department to distinguish the consumption needs of the capitalists; for our purposes nothing would be gained.

2. Joan Robinson (1951, p. 19) in her introduction to the English translation points out, however, that the “arithmetic is perfectly neutral between the two departments”. Rosdolsky (1968, p. 448) labels this simple didactic phrase of Robinson's as having “proved” the neutrality, and goes on to report that Robinson also proved that “the impulse to accumulation could come equally well from either Department”! Actually, Robinson is much less impressed by her own observation than is Rosdolsky. She immediately continues by saying that “behind all this rigmarole lies the real problem which she [Luxemburg] is trying to formulate. Where does the demand come from which keeps accumulation going?” (p. 19.)

While it is formally correct that the arithmetic is neutral between the two departments, a defense for the priority of Department I over Department II within capitalism can be made – see, for example, Zarembka (2000, Section II) regarding Lenin's reading of *Capital*.

3. Luxemburg indicates that in a socialist society, in which Department II dominates, these same formal requirements would also obtain.

4. Howard and King (1989, pp. 83, 107) confirm Kautsky's conception from an earlier, 1884 unsigned article “Tongking” in *Die Neue Zeit* (indexed under Kautsky's name). By the way, they date the later Kautsky article as 1901, but the relevant number for *Die Neue Zeit*, i.e. 20, bears the dating for 1901–1902 and the relevant passages appear in 1902.

5. The German 17th and 18th editions are both dated 1919; the 1936 English translation fails to provide the edition upon which that translation is based but appears to be a late one.

6. The printed English translation of the *Anti-Critique* omits the phrase “in commodities and the use of this surplus value to expand production” from Luxemburg’s sentence on its page 71, but has it on p. 192 (Bukharin quoting Luxemburg). It is very probably a lost line in printing. The full, correct sentence that we cite makes it absolutely clear that Luxemburg does **not** define accumulation as the amassing of money; rather, money is **between** two things. A reader of the passage on p. 71 in English translation would likely be confused without knowing why.

In any case, we are at a loss how Bukharin could so distort her position by skipping over the full sentence reproduced here. He even plays with the words *salto mortale* in his own text, getting into the reader’s subconscious that he Bukharin has read her: the reader can take his word for the fact that, yes, she really does **define** accumulation as the amassing of money capital.

7. This latter quote is actually in a section entitled “Definition of Accumulation”. Bukharin immediately continues: “Under no circumstances should the accumulation of capital be confused with the purely functional role of the latter (the money phase of capital circulation). Still less, as we have seen above, should one confuse the accumulation of capital with the accumulation of its *detached* functional form, i.e. with the accumulation of money capital in the real sense of the word, of interest-bearing capital (‘moneyed capital in the English sense’). The fact that the movement of the total social capital is *accompanied* by an accumulation of money capital (as Marx correctly stresses), in no way means that the accumulation of capital is *equivalent* with the latter” (p. 194).

Note that even Luxemburg’s biographer was sucked into this distortion by Bukharin: “After Rosa’s death Bukharin published a criticism of her theory of accumulation. As we have already mentioned, he succeeded in fact in uncovering several weaknesses in her presentation. In various places in her book she made the obviously wrong claim that capital accumulation was the amassing of money capital; this was what mattered to the capitalists. In reality, the building up of money capital is only a link in the accumulation process . . . Bukharin was right in criticizing this.” (Froelich, 1939, p. 161) Froelich does not state any other weakness by which Bukharin succeeded in his criticism of Luxemburg.

8. Grossman’s reading without apparent knowledge of Lenin’s (1897) quite critical one. Grossman (1934) later changed his opinion and came close to Lenin’s evaluation of Sismondi.

9. Grossmann refers here to “them” which could be read to include Bauer’s and Kautsky’s works, works which, however, came after Luxemburg’s *Accumulation*.

10. In 1942, Sweezy (1942, p. 212) correctly notes that a rate of growth of constant capital in Bauer’s model equal to, instead of greater than, the level of the growth in labor power would imply that the scheme can go on indefinitely. Sweezy thought that this observation undermined Grossmann’s utilization of Bauer’s model for a theory of breakdown.

11. Early Mattick (1935) does say, interestingly if controversially, that Luxemburg “was quite correct in recognizing in the Marxian theory of accumulation the law of collapse of capitalism; she overlooked, however, the Marxian basis for this view and produced her own theory of realization, which Lenin correctly rejected as unmarxist and false . . . Marx’s law of accumulation is identical with that of the fall of the rate of profit” (pp. 36, 38).

12. As to the second part, we can note that the Russian edition of Luxemburg’s *Accumulation of Capital* apparently did not even bother to translate it, judging from

Dunayevskaya (1982) in which citations to the Russian edition move from pagination at the end of the first part immediately to the beginning of the third part.

13. Not, however, Luxemburg's biographer Froelich (1939, p. 160); Rosdolsky (1968, pp. 497–499); perhaps Dunayevskaya, see below.

14. As we have found for Sweezy, Luxemburg (1921, pp. 100–104) finds the same error of interpretation by Bauer. Bauer (1913), following Marx's *Volume 2* schemes, had taken variable capital  $v$  fixed per worker. While Marx had had no technological change occurring, for Bauer the fixity of  $v$  implies that real wages and consumption of workers are rising as technology improves. Luxemburg (p. 103) then feels called upon to note that consumption goods being "allotted to the workers, that does not mean, speaking in *social* terms, that capital is realizing surplus value, but that it is delivering variable capital in commodities". So, Sweezy missed, ignored, or misunderstood the relevant remarks of Luxemburg on Bauer in his own reading of her *Anti-Critique*. If Sweezy were aware, he needed to respond in the context of his own critique.

15. Howard and King (p. 78) describe her then as "young, aggressive and very ambitious". Is there something special about being a woman? Neither Bernstein, Kautsky, nor Lenin is so described, nor do others get personality typing. Luxemburg's criticism of Bernstein is a "diatribe" (p. 80). After summarizing Bauer's answer to Luxemburg's *Accumulation*, they claim her work "an easy target" (p. 120). Luxemburg's *Anti-Critique* is "distinctly ill-tempered". But Bukharin's (1924) style of rebutting her is unchallenged (p. 114).

16. By way of further reference, alienation as "Marx's concept of man in capitalist society" is the theme of Ollman's (1971) work. Ollman lists some references to alienation in Marx's later work and references an earlier work of Dunayevskaya as "one of the better discussions of the place of alienation in *Capital*" (p. 290, fn. 1).

17. Anderson (1988, pp. 65–66) reports uncritically such a supposed tie-in of Althusser to Stalin in his review of Dunayevskaya.

18. Judging both from this text, footnoted by number 11, and text on her previous page, corresponding to the top of page 489 in Marx (1905b) and footnoted by her number 9.

19. See Dunayevskaya (1982, p. 34, fn. 8).

## REFERENCES

(Note: The original date of publication for the original edition in the original language is used after a name, immediately followed by the cited source.)

- Althusser, L. (1965a). *For Marx*, translated by Ben Brewster, Penguin, London, 1969.
- Althusser, L. (1965b). The Object of *Capital*. In: L. Althusser & E. Balibar, *Reading Capital* (new and abridged ed.), B. Brewster (trans.). New Left Books, London, 1970.
- Althusser, L. (1968). Lenin and Philosophy. In: L. Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (2nd ed.), pp. 27–68B. B. Brewster (trans.). New Left Books, London, 1971; 2nd ed., 1977, pp. 27–68.
- Althusser, L. (1969). Preface to *Capital*. In: L. Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. B. Brewster (trans.). New Left Books, London, 1971; 2nd ed., 1977, pp. 69–101.
- Althusser, L. (1972). Reply to John Lewis, as revised in 1973, in *Essays in Self-Criticism*. G. Lock (trans.). New Left Books, London, 1976, pp. 33–99.

- Anderson, K. (1988). Rosa Dunayevskaya, 1910 to 1987, Marxist Economist and Philosopher. *Review of Radical Political Economy*, 20(1), 62–74.
- Bauer, O. (1913). The Accumulation of Capital. J. E. King (trans.), *History of Political Economy*, 18(1), 1996, 87–110.
- Boudin, L. (1907). Mathematische Formeln gegen Karl Marx. *Die Neue Zeit*, 25, 524–535, 557–567 and 603–610.
- Bukharin, N. I. (1924). *Imperialism and the Accumulation of Capital*. Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1972.
- Desai, M. (Ed.) (1989). *Lenin's Economic Writings*. Humanities Press International, Atlantic Highlands, NJ.
- Desai, M. (1987). Simple and Extended Reproduction. *The New Palgrave: Marxian Economics*. Macmillan, London and Basingstoke, pp. 338–341.
- Dunayevskaya, R. (1982). *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (2nd ed.). University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1991.
- Evenitsky, A. (1963). Marx's Model of Expanded Reproduction. *Science and Society*, 27(2), 159–175.
- Froelich, P. (1939). *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work*, newly translated from the third 1967. J. Hoonweg (Ed.). Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1972.
- Giussani, P. (1983). Reproduction Schema, *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, T. Bottomore (Ed.), Blackwell, Oxford and Cambridge, Mass., 2nd revised edition, 1991, pp. 471–474.
- Grossman, H. (1922). 'The Theory of Economic Crises', *Bulletin international de l'académie Polonaise des sciences et des lettres. Classe de philologie, classe d'histoire et de philosophie. Les années 1919. 1920* (presented 16 June 1919), pp. 285–290. Republished in *Value, Capitalist Dynamics and Money, Research in Political Economy*, Volume 18, P. Zarembka (Ed.), JAI/Elsevier Press, New York, 2000, pp. 171–180, with a Preface by R. Kuhn.
- Grossman, H. (1924). "Simonde de Sismondi et ses théories économiques (Une nouvelle interprétation de sa pensée)", *Bibliotheca Universitatis Liberae Polonae*, Warsaw, Fasc. 11, 77 pp.
- Grossman, H. (1934). "Jean Charles Léonard Simonde de Sismondi". In: E. R. A. Seligman & A. Johnson (Eds), *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. Macmillan, New York, pp. 69–71.
- Grossmann, H. (1929). *The Law of Accumulation and Breakdown of the Capitalist System: Being also a Theory of Crisis*, translated and abridged by J. Banaji, with a foreword and introduction by T. Kennedy, Pluto Press, 1992. Further material is translated into English by K. Lapides, Henryk Grossmann on Marx's Wage Theory and the 'Increasing Misery' Controversy. *History of Political Economy*, (26)2, 239–266.
- Howard, M. C., & King J. E. (1989). *A History of Marxian Economics, Volume I, 1883–1929*. Macmillan, Houndmills and London.
- Jay, M. (1973). *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923–1950*. Little, Brown and Co., Boston and Toronto.
- Kautsky, K. (1887). *The Economic Doctrines of Karl Marx*, translated [from an unspecified German edition seemingly as late or later than the 17th and 18th editions of 1919] by H. J. Stenning, Macmillan, New York, 1936, reprint edition of Hyperion Press reprint edition, Westport, Connecticut, 1979.
- Kautsky, K. (1902). Krisentheorien. *Die Neue Zeit*, 20, 37–47, 76–81, 110–118, 133–143.
- Kowalik, T. (1966). R. Luxemburg's Theory of Accumulation and Imperialism (An Attempted Interpretation). *Problems of Economic Dynamics: Essays in Honor of Michal Kalecki*, Polish Scientific Publishers, Warsaw, 203–219.
- Kowalik, T. (1987). "Rosa Luxemburg". *The New Palgrave: Marxian Economics*. Macmillan, London and Basingstoke, 247–253.



- Kuehne, K. (1972). *Economics and Marxism, Volume 2, The Dynamics of the Marxian System*, Translated from the German by R. Shaw. Macmillan, New York, 1979.
- Kuhn, R. (2000). Henryk Grossman, a Marxist Activist and Theorist: On the 50th Anniversary of his Death. *Value, Capitalist Dynamics and Money, Research in Political Economy*, Volume 18, P. Zarembka, (Ed.), JAI/Elsevier, Stamford, CT and Amsterdam, pp. 111–170.
- Lapides, K. (1998). *Marx's Wage Theory in Historical Perspective: Its Origins, Development and Interpretation*. Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, and London.
- Lenin, V. I. (1897). A Characterization of Economic Romanticism (Sismondi and Our Native Sismondists), *Collected Works, Volume 2*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1960, pp. 129–265.
- Lenin, V. I. (1899a). A Note on the Question of Market Theory (Apropos the Polemic of Messrs. Tugan-Baranovsky and Bulgakov), *Collected Works, Volume 4*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1960, 55–64.
- Lenin, V. I. (1899b). *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1956.
- Lenin, V. I. (1899c). Once More on the Theory of Realization, *Collected Works, Volume 4*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1960, pp. 74–93.
- Lenin, V. I. (1899d). Reply to Mr. P. Nezhdanov, *Collected Works, Volume 4*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1960, pp. 160–165.
- Lenin, V. I. (1924). (written 1922), Notes of a Publicist, *Collected Works, Volume 33*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1966, pp. 204–211.
- Leontiev, A. (1935). *Political Economy – A Beginner's Course*, S. D. Kogan (trans.). Cooperative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR, Moscow and Leningrad.
- Luxemburg, R. (1913). *The Accumulation of Capital*. Monthly Review Press, New York, and Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1951.
- Luxemburg, R. (1921). (written 1915). *The Accumulation of Capital – An Anti-Critique*. Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1972.
- Marx, K. (1867). *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production, Volume 1*. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1954, and Lawrence and Wishart, London, 767 pp.
- Marx, K. (1872–1875). *Le capital*, traduction par J. Roy, dans *Oeuvres de Karl Marx, Economie I*, édition établie par Maximilien Rubel, Editions Gallimard, Paris, 1963.
- Marx, K. (1885). *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production, Volume 2*, F. Engels (Ed.), Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1956, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1974, 551 pp.
- Marx, K. (1894). *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production, Volume 3*, F. Engels (Ed.), Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1959, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1974, 948 pp.
- Marx, K. (1905a). *Theories of Surplus Value: Part I*. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1963.
- Marx, K. (1905b). *Theories of Surplus Value: Part II*. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1968.
- Marx, K. (1932). *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, translated by M. Milligan and edited with an introduction by D. J. Struik. International Publishers, New York, 1964.
- Marx, K. (1939–1941). (original edition published in the Soviet Union), *Grundrisse*, translated by Martin Nicolaus, Vintage Books, New York and Toronto, 1973; also, *Marx-Engels: Collected Works, Volumes 28 and 29*, International Publishers, New York, 1986.
- Mattick, P. (1935). Luxemburg versus Lenin, Part I, in *Modern Monthly* Vol. 9, No. 5, 300–08; entire article printed in his *Anti-Bolshevik Communism*, Sharpe, White Plains, NY, 1978, pp. 19–48 and cited here.
- Mattick, P. (1974). *Economic Crisis and Crisis Theory*, translated by P. Mattick, Jr., Sharpe, White Plains, NY, 1981.
- Mattick, P. (1978). “Rosa Luxemburg in Retrospect”, *Root and Branch*, Number 6.

- Oakley, A. (1985). *Marx's Critique of Political Economy: Intellectual Sources and Evolution, Volume II: 1861 to 1863*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley.
- Ollman, B. (1971). *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*. Cambridge University Press, London and New York.
- Pannekoek, A. (1934). *The Theory of the Collapse of Capitalism*, translated by A. Buick, *Capital and Class*, No. 1, Spring 1977, pp. 59–81.
- Robinson, J. (1951). Introduction to the English translation of Luxemburg (1913), 13–28.
- Robinson, J. (1956). *The Accumulation of Capital*, London, Macmillan.
- Rosdolsky, R. (1968). *The Making of Marx's 'Capital', in Two Volumes*, P. Burgess (trans.). 2nd (unabridged) paper back ed., Pluto Press, London, 1989.
- Sweezy, P. (1942). *The Theory of Capitalist Development*, Monthly Review, New York, 1968.
- Tarback, K. J. (1972). Editor's Introduction and Appendices I-III, to the English translation of Luxemburg (1921) and Bukharin (1924), published jointly by Monthly Review Press, New York and London, pp. 14–43 and pp. 271–280.
- Zarembka, P. (2000). Accumulation of Capital, Its Definition: A Century after Lenin and Luxemburg. *Value, Capitalist Dynamics and Money, Research in Political Economy*, Volume 18, P. Zarembka, editor, JAI/Elsevier, Stamford, CT and Amsterdam, pp. 183–241.

## APPENDIX

### SCHEMES OF EXTENDED REPRODUCTION

Marx (1885) developed two arithmetical illustrations for schemes of extended reproduction. Both had the rate of surplus value as having a unit value, and both had one-half of surplus value used for accumulation of capital (additional labor power and additional constant capital) and the other half used for subsistence and luxury consumption of capitalists. Both kept the organic composition of capital  $c/v$  in each department as fixed as extended reproduction takes place. The first illustration (pp. 514–517) takes the organic composition in means-of-production Department I to be 4:1, while the organic composition in consumption-goods Department II is taken to be 2:1. In the “second illustration” (pp. 518–523) both departments have the same organic composition of 5:1. The two illustrations begin from the following numerical examples:

#### Marx's First Illustration

$$\text{Department I: } 4000 c + 1000 v + 1000 s = 6000$$

$$\text{Department II: } 1500 c + 750 v + 750 s = 3000$$

#### Marx's Second Illustration

$$\text{Department I: } 5000 c + 1000 v + 1000 s = 7000$$

$$\text{Department II: } 1430 c + 285 v + 285 s = 2000$$

Pannekoek (1934, pp. 63–64) used different numerical values for the second illustration, an example easier to deal with. Thus, he takes the organic composition as 4:1 in both departments. With  $k$  denoting consumption by capitalists which is one half of surplus value in each department – the other half being used for accumulation, we obtain

**Pannekoek's Illustration for Marx's Second Illustration**

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Department I:} & \quad 4400 c + 1100 v + 1100 s = 6600, \\ & \quad \text{with } 1100 s = 550 k + (440 c + 110 v) \\ \text{Department II:} & \quad 1600 c + 400 v + 400 s = 2400, \\ & \quad \text{with } 400 s = 200 k + (160 c + 40 v) \end{aligned}$$

After one period of accumulation, with one half of surplus value being used for accumulation, i.e. 750 (550 + 200 in the two departments) – the 750 being divided between 600 additional means of production (440+160 in the two departments) and 150 additional means of subsistence for newly hired workers (110 + 40 in the two departments) – and the other half being used for capitalist consumption (550 + 200 = 750), the relevant numbers for Pannekoek's example become:

**Pannekoek: Second Period**

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Department I:} & \quad 4840 c + 1210 v + 1210 s = 7260, \\ & \quad \text{with } 1210 s = 605 k + (484 c + 121 v) \\ \text{Department II:} & \quad 1760 c + 440 v + 440 s = 2640, \\ & \quad \text{with } 440 s = 220 k + (176 c + 44 v) \end{aligned}$$

In other words, the total value of production has grown 10% from 9000 to 9900, with 10% more workers hired and 10% more means of production being used in addition to the 6000 which were originally required.

Pannekoek goes on to comment that either allowing for differing organic compositions or rates of accumulation in the two departments, or allowing for organic compositions to grow, would bring the schemes closer to reality, but would not change basic results since the proportion of Department I to II could always be adjusted as needed to establish equilibrium (at least in theory, if not always in reality).

Although Pannekoek doesn't write it down, the next period would be

**Pannekoek: Third Period**

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Department I:} & \quad 5324 c + 1331 v + 1331 s = 7986, \\ & \quad \text{with } 1331 s = 665.5 k + (532.4 c + 133.1 v) \\ \text{Department II:} & \quad 1936 c + 484 v + 484 s = 2904, \\ & \quad \text{with } 484 s = 242 k + (193.6 c + 48.4 v) \end{aligned}$$

Incidentally, Pannekoek had a mathematics degree, and was a well-known astronomer.

Pannekoek concludes from this analysis that “it can be clearly seen that all the products are sold within capitalism itself [including] the 440 + 160 which contain the surplus value accumulated . . . [and] the 110 + 40 . . . bought by the additional workers” (p. 64). So, he says, Luxemburg is mistaken. There is no point for us to respond to this assertion of a mistake, because there is nothing substantively added on to what Marx had written, Luxemburg addressed, and the body of this paper has discussed.

Bukharin (1924, pp. 154–159) formulated the schemes algebraically, and concluded with the same conditions for extended reproduction as had Luxemburg (1913, p. 127), albeit Luxemburg’s condition refers to **increases** in constant capital in Department II equaling increases for variable capital plus increases for capitalist consumption in Department I, while Bukharin’s condition refers to the **level** of the new constant capital in Department II equaling the level of the new variable capital and the capitalist consumption in Department I (p. 159). Thus, for Pannekoek’s example above, Bukharin’s condition (at the end of the first period ready for use at the beginning of the second period) is that constant capital for Department II, i.e. 1760 (= 1600 + 160), must equal variable capital for Department I, i.e. 1210 (= 1100 + 110), plus the capitalist consumption during the first period, i.e. 550. In fact, this obtains, 1760 = 1210 + 550. For the following period, Bukharin’s figures are 1936 = 1331 + 605. Luxemburg’s condition, on the other hand, refers to the corresponding **changes** in each of the magnitudes. In other words, 176 (= 1936–1760) must equal the sum of 121 (= 1331–1100) + 55 (= 605–550). In the example, it does.

Although he does not mention conditions for extended reproduction, Tarbuck (1972, Appendix I, pp. 271–274) lays out Marx’s second scheme showing the process step-by-step and may aid in understanding. Kuehne (1972, pp. 107–108) does lay out both Bukharin’s and Luxemburg’s conditions for extended reproduction and seems to prefer the greater simplicity of Luxemburg’s.

Bukharin’s algebraic formulation was criticized by Sweezy (1942, pp. 162–168) who thought that Bukharin had not included increasing capitalist consumption during accumulation. Sweezy added a term for that increase. Sweezy’s point is difficult to understand, however, since Bukharin’s condition refers to levels, not changes in levels. Furthermore, Marx had assumed that the rate of surplus value as well as the proportion of surplus value used for capitalist consumption remain fixed so that capitalist consumption does necessarily increase over time. Kuehne ignores Sweezy’s criticism of Bukharin, while Tarbuck (1972, Appendix II) defends Bukharin, saying that the latter had only excluded increasing capitalist consumption in the first period, not for later periods. Tarbuck goes on to say that if changes in levels of capitalist consumption are to be included, other changes in levels should

also be included and he modifies Sweezy accordingly. Such a defense of Bukharin seems unnecessary as Bukharin was discussing levels, and levels can increase over time.

With the help of a statistician H. Chester, Rosdolsky (1968, pp. 448–449) elaborates on the equilibrium condition offered by Bukharin to include the case in which the organic compositions in the two departments are distinct (although remaining unchanged). Tarbuck does not indicate that he had seen Rosdolsky's work (perhaps because the English translation was not to appear until 1977). Kuehne (1972, pp. 105–107) seems unimpressed by Rosdolsky's equilibrium condition and provides an alternative interpretation. In any case, on his following page Rosdolsky indicates that he accepts Sweezy's criticism of Bukharin even if, for Rosdolsky, the problem does not seem to involve Bukharin's basic condition for equilibrium under extended reproduction, but rather two derived conditions. To this reader the relevant passage in Bukharin (p. 158) does not in fact pose such supposedly derived conditions that Rosdolsky lists. This controversy does not seem worth further discussion.

We should note that in Appendix I to Sweezy's work, pp. 365–374, Shigeto Tsuru offers his own explanation of Marx's reproduction schemes and indicates their relationship to Keynesian categories.

# CLASS AND CAUSATION IN BOURDIEU

Elliot B. Weininger

## INTRODUCTION

### I. IMPENITENT WEBERIANISM OR VULGAR MATERIALISM?

Bourdieu has long refused to affiliate himself with any of the “isms” deriving from the classical figures in sociology, asserting that, inevitably phrased in “either/or” terms, they tend to function according to a logic of “accusation” rather than the logic of science (1990a, pp. 27–28). Of the oppositions to which the “isms” give rise, it is no doubt the confrontation of Marx with Weber, potentially founded on any one of various divergences, which most frequently offers him the opportunity to voice this refusal. And, even if one is inclined to doubt Bourdieu’s rather complete withdrawal of meaning from such categorical formulations, there is no reason to deny the possibility that, in addition to their substantive content, these oppositions may serve as indicators of underlying confusions.

It is this vein that we might reach across time and space in order to establish a confrontation between two verdicts offered on Bourdieu’s work itself. First, we can note the judgment of Poulantzas, who in the course of a discussion of the class position of managers, associates Bourdieu with a perspective similar to that of Miliband and Mills. The concept of cultural capital, it is asserted, merely captures the status unity of various elite sub-groups, and the

---

**Bringing Capitalism Back for Critique by Social Theory, Volume 21, pages 49–114.**  
Copyright © 2002 by Elsevier Science Ltd.  
All rights of reproduction in any form reserved.  
ISBN: 0-7623-0762-5

language of classes and class fractions amounts to nothing more than an empty “Marxism *oblige*,” resulting in a sociology derisible for its “impenitent Weberianism” (Poulantzas, 1975, pp. 177–178). To this we can contrast the evaluation recently offered by Alexander, in which Bourdieu is said to incorporate Weberian premises only via a highly distorted interpretation, one that recalls “‘sympathetic’ Marxist” and polemical “neo-Marxist” readings. Here the explanatory intentions which animate Bourdieu’s sociology can only give rise to “crudely” and “strikingly reductionist” accounts of this or that object. Moreover, the vocabulary of class fractions is enough to confer on it a “Poulantzian” tendency (Alexander, 1995, pp. 160–178).

When juxtaposed, these dismissals (and others could be substituted) suggest that the meaning of one of Bourdieu’s key concepts – the concept of class – remains less than self-evident. And while it is certainly the case that, for Bourdieu, class retains the role it received in many of the “classical” sociological accounts of modern societies – that is, the role of explanatory variable *par excellence* – it is nevertheless also true that relatively little detailed consideration has been devoted to the question of whether his utilization remains within the context of one or another received usage, or whether it deviates in significant respects. In what follows, I would therefore like to undertake a closer examination of Bourdieu’s class analysis, attending simultaneously to the epistemic, methodological, and substantive issues it entails. As will become apparent, these are interwoven with one another in a peculiarly dense (and arguably “Bourdieuian”) manner.

## II. PROBLEMS WITH CLASS

In a highly influential article, Brubaker devotes considerable attention to the question of Bourdieu’s concept of class, finding it to be one of the least satisfying of aspects his sociology. Indeed, for Brubaker, who is primarily interested in the concept as it is deployed in *Distinction*, this is because it has become something of a sociological monstrosity: “[b]y virtue of its strategic location at the intersection of shared external conditions of existence and shared internalized dispositions, shared configurations of power and shared styles of life, class is the universal explanatory principle in Bourdieu’s metatheory” (1985, p. 769). To be sure, Bourdieu does assert the universality of social class *qua explanans* in *Distinction* (1984, p. 114). However, the precise nature of the concept, as used there, as well its explanatory significance, are not immediately evident. Indeed, at the time he published his essay, Brubaker was unable to take account of various articles and lectures in which Bourdieu has attempted to retrospectively clarify the (undoubtedly opaque) notion of class

upon which *Distinction* drew (primarily Bourdieu, 1985, 1987a).<sup>1</sup> In the present essay, I seek to reconstruct this notion on the basis of Bourdieu's more recent writings.

Bourdieu's recent approach to class, like his more general theory of practice, stresses the reconciliation of "objectivist" and "subjectivist" perspectives, of a "nominalist" view that sees only "classes on paper" with a "realist" view that sees "mobilized" and conflictual classes.<sup>2</sup> Considered in very general terms, of course, the conceptual intentions revealed by this concern are in no way new – class, it could easily be argued, is a concept that is particularly susceptible to the antinomies of sociological thought that Bourdieu so disdains. This being the case, we might try to identify the distinctive aspects of his approach from accounts originating "closer to home." Thus, Bourdieu himself assesses the evolution of his thought by speaking of "the progress leading from the substantialist concept of class to the relational notion of class position, which was a crucial turning point, and thence to the notion of social space" (1993a, p. 264). Wacquant offers a similar appraisal when he declares that "within the same broad relational framework, . . . one can detect a notable evolution from earlier to later conceptualizations of class as an historical construction rooted in social space" (Wacquant, in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 6, note 10). The spatial model to which Bourdieu and Wacquant refer entails the treatment of the social order in terms of a structure of positions organized according to particular parameters, and is indeed intended to fulfill an explanatory function. To anticipate a later argument, I would like to suggest that Bourdieu's most important innovation here lies in the fact that he construes the model as a *single* space which exhibits a *multidimensional* arrangement. At the same time, however, this structure is partially – but not fully – determinative of class formations (that is, of the emergence of groups composed of individuals who, given the same structural location, share a symbolically expressed collective identity). Indeed, Bourdieu characterizes the relationship between class structure and class formation in statistical terminology: analysis of structural positions allows one to identify only "probable classes" (1985, p. 725). This amounts to a qualification of the relation between the two aspects of social class (the "objective" and the "subjective" or the "nominal" and the "real," etc.), in the sense that any such analysis reveals only the relative likelihood of particular class formations, given a certain structural arrangement. Indeed, for Bourdieu, it actually implies that, given a structural arrangement, the formation of classes remains only one among other possibilities of "group" formation (as evidenced even by the title of Bourdieu, 1987a).

While this preliminary characterization is both partial and vague, I believe that it is adequate to at least ameliorate objections, such as those expressed by Brubaker, concerning the purportedly totalizing nature of class in Bourdieu's



sociology: one might well ask whether Bourdieu's "probable classes" could just as accurately be designated "probable ethnicities" and the like. What Brubaker apparently fails to acknowledge, in other words, is that although the relation between class structure and class formation is a *causal* one for Bourdieu, it is also a *conditional* one. This being said, however, it remains to be seen exactly how Bourdieu conceives the two aspects of class which are incorporated into this characterization, and more importantly, exactly how he understands their relation. In attempting to work through these issues in detail, I want to attend, in particular, to the question of how, for Bourdieu, class is understood to function as causal factor, and consequently, how it is utilized for explanatory purposes. Criticisms and denunciations of Bourdieu's "impenitence" or "vulgarity" all presuppose at least a measure of clarity concerning this side of his sociology. My main interest is merely in developing this clarification (rather than evaluating the validity of objections aimed at his work). I believe this endeavor to be as important to the critics as to Bourdieu's defenders, because, as I will suggest, Bourdieu's work cannot simply be assumed to fit neatly into one or another existing school of class or stratification analysis.

In what follows, I first seek to reconstruct, if only in outline, the earlier "evolution" of Bourdieu's thought on class (Sections III–IV). This serves to introduce problems and questions that are dealt with in *Distinction* (and in later work) without ever being explicitly stated there. Subsequently, I discuss *Distinction* in detail, focusing in particular on the meaning of what Bourdieu calls "objective class" and the nature of the causal efficacy he attributes to it (Sections V–VI). Once this has been supplemented by an account of the meaning of class analysis as a sociological undertaking based on an explanatory program, the question of the place and role of class formations arises – a question which, due to the subject matter of the book, prioritizes the dimension of *lifestyle* (Sections VII–VIII). With these aspects of Bourdieu's project clarified, it becomes possible to situate it vis-à-vis other schools of class and stratification analysis (Section IX). After briefly considering what I take to be the most important of Bourdieu's post-*Distinction* innovations – the concept of a "field of power" – and of its place in the class analysis of contemporary societies (Section X), I will conclude with a discussion of the underlying premises upon which, in my view, the edifice rests (Section XI).

## **CLASSES, CAUSES, AND THE INTRICACIES OF STRUCTURE**

Bourdieu's work can be read as a more or less sustained reflection on the meaning and use of the concept of class. While I do not intend to inventory

these reflections, I do think it is necessary to draw from them a series of themes and questions in order to appreciate fully the complexities of the class analysis put forth in *Distinction*. When reconstructed, Bourdieu's approach to class can be seen to parallel the development of his basic conceptual repertoire. Hence, to begin with, I examine a 1966 essay which has two purposes: first, it attempts to work out the degree to which classes must be seen as aggregates which are defined by strictly economic criteria. Here it becomes clear that when speaking of "class," Bourdieu wants to include a wide range of phenomena – such as the attitudes, beliefs, and practices of members – which cannot be fully reduced to the effect of economic determinations, but which, at the same time, are not independent of these determinations. He then proceeds, secondly, to introduce the theme of status groups. In this part of the essay, Bourdieu attempts to develop the now-familiar claim that lifestyle differences amount to a symbolic "expression" of class relations, an expression which, however, is not understood as such by the individuals who enter into symbolically mediated interactions. Subsequently, I undertake a consideration of Bourdieu's writings on education. In these analyses, the focus is somewhat different: given a basic notion of class, the question becomes one of establishing how this notion can be invoked to explain a process that unfolds over time (i.e. the movement of individuals through the levels of the educational system). As developed in *Reproduction*, the answer to this problem incorporates many of the basic sociological concepts that are associated with Bourdieu's work, the most important being "cultural capital" and "habitus." On the basis of such concepts, Bourdieu and Passeron seek to develop an ambitious model founded on the assertion of an identity that links putatively discreet causal processes. Once the ambiguities with which this model is beset have been sketched, it can be suggested that *Distinction* amounts, at least in part, to a resolution of various conceptual problems which stood at the heart of Bourdieu's previous sociology.

### III. AN EARLY VIEW OF CLASS AND STATUS GROUP

Bourdieu's 1966 article on class is divided into two parts; the first elaborates and defends a distinction between properties pertaining to "class situation" (or "class condition") and properties pertaining to "class position," while the second takes up the meaning of status groups, and – offering an early version of premise which forms the basis of *Distinction* – argues that such groups are actually "misrecognized" social classes (see also 1990b, pp. 135–141). The manner in which these two discussions fit together is not especially clear. The former is largely committed to defending the viability of inter-societal generalizations in light of the distinction between "class situation" and "class position." The latter,

by contrast, seeks to explicate and defend an account of the conditions under which a symbolic system may be analyzed in independence from the social arrangement to which it belongs. The two strands of the essay are, however, closely connected, although this is undoubtedly easier to discern retrospectively.

Bourdieu begins by asking whether sociologists have a well-defined meaning in mind when they utilize terms such as “social structure,” “class structure,” and the like. “To take the notion of social structure seriously is to inquire into what each social class owes to the fact that it occupies a position in a historically defined social structure, and is affected by the relations which connect it with the other constitutive parts of the structure.” Any class characteristics that can be understood only via reference to these relations are termed “properties of position.” These are contrasted with the properties deriving from the “class situation” – which is to say, *ex negativo*, those that owe nothing to the location of the class within a particular structure, and which are therefore merely “juxtaposed” with those of other classes. Bourdieu refers here to those properties which are associated with “a certain type of occupational practice or the material conditions of existence” (Bourdieu, 1966, p. 201).

The essay provides numerous illustrations. Taking up an assertion of Weber’s, Bourdieu contrasts those properties attributed to the peasantry which derive from its “situation and practice of working the earth” with those that derive from its position in a particular social structure. To the former belong “a certain type of respect for nature . . . and certain recurrent traits of peasant religiosity.” An instance of the latter can be seen in the case of “traditional Algeria, [where] the religion of the countryside owes a number of its characteristics to the fact that it does not cease to judge itself by reference to the religion of the town” (Bourdieu, 1966, pp. 201–202). In another example, he illustrates the notion of situational properties with a claim asserting that instability of employment, and its resultant economic insecurity, tend to prevent the “sub-proletariat from constituting a coherent group capable of pursuing economic and social demands.” Contrasted with this, and thus illustrating the notion of positional properties, is the claim (again taken from Weber) that “resentment, disguised as moral indignation, is historically associated with an inferior position in the social structure, and, more precisely, with membership in the lower stratum of the middle classes” (Bourdieu, 1966, p. 205).

We can gain a purchase on Bourdieu’s argument if we note that the purpose of the essay, in many respects, is to work through his relationship to structuralism. In a number of writings from this period, Bourdieu suggests that the main contribution of structuralism lies in its application – within the human sciences – of the notion of “relationalism.” The meaning of this notion can be stated in the form of a postulate: “single elements only hold their properties by

virtue of the relations linking one with another within a system, that is to say, by virtue of the function they fulfill within the system of relations" (Bourdieu, 1968, p. 682; see also Bourdieu, Chamboredon & Passeron, 1991, p. 46, and *passim*). Stated otherwise, this implies that an element *A* exhibits certain characteristics solely as a result of the fact that it is *not-B*, *not-C*, etc.; and likewise, *B* and *C* each attain their identity via the relations within which they stand opposed to other elements in the system. Relational properties – those which derive from differences – are therefore differentiated from "intrinsic" properties, which is to say, those which "attach to" or "inhere in" the element in question irrespective of its relations to other such entities or elements. When Bourdieu approaches the subject of class by means of this distinction, he thus affirms, on the one hand, that a class exhibits certain features which must be explained by reference to the members' occupational practices or the "material conditions" within which they subsist; but he also implies, on the other, that such explanation is inevitably limited, and that certain features can only be accounted for via reference to the contrasting aspects of other classes. Hence, a strictly economic account of class – for Bourdieu, one oriented to occupational practices and "material conditions" – is both necessary but partial. The distinction between a "class situation" and a "class position," in other words, implies a duality of explanatory principles.

This distinction is immediately complicated by the statement that the degree to which a class is characterized by one or the other type of property is variable – and that it will be found to vary not only from one society to the next, but also from one class to the next *within* a single society. This is because situational properties and positional properties do not sit side by side, independent of one another. Indeed, according to Bourdieu, the "class situation defines the *margin of variation*, generally very narrow, which is left to properties of position" (1966, p. 202) – that is, the "material conditions of existence" differentially promote or constrain the emergence of relational properties. What Bourdieu seems to want to assert is the idea that classes are differentially affected by material necessity, in the sense that for those subject to material deprivation, practices and beliefs will be directly formed out of an adaptation to this situation. Thus, the less a particular class within a particular society is subjected to material necessity, the more it exhibits a "margin of variation," in the sense that its characteristic practices and beliefs will have been determined according to the logic of inter-class opposition.<sup>3</sup> Bourdieu, of course, understands this latter "determination" in a strong sense: the fact that such characteristics are formed out of a "freedom from necessity" does not imply an open space of autonomy for the members of a given class. Relational propositions on social classes are, at least in principle, *structural* in nature.

However, this points us to a number of obscurities that suffuse Bourdieu's early reflections on class. When he speaks of the situational properties associated with a class, Bourdieu is referring, in a more or less routine manner, to the economic determination of attitudes, beliefs, practices, and the like. Similarly, when he speaks of the positional properties associated with a class – that is, of those characteristic features which are determined by the relations which obtain between it and other classes – he is also referring to the emergence of particular attitudes, beliefs, and practices, on the supposition that the absence of economic necessity opens up a “space” for the play relational negation. Indeed, this latter point is supported by nearly all of the illustrative examples that he offers. Nevertheless, as soon we recall that the original intent of the distinction was to develop a more precise formulation of the notion of *social structure* – particularly as it pertains to class – confusions become evident: if, in keeping with conventional usage, the notion of a “class structure” can be said to entail (at minimum) the identification of a system of *institutionally circumscribed* economic locations, then we must recognize that it is precisely this which is relegated to the notion of a “class situation.” In other words, in attempting to mobilize the structuralist postulate, but to simultaneously retain a concept of economic determination, Bourdieu is unable to break the notion of “relationalism” out of its semiotic mode – that is, its seeming affinity (in keeping with structuralist anthropology) for the analysis of systems of *meaning*. This assessment is essentially confirmed by an article from the same period which evaluates the relevance of structuralism's prioritization of relations to “the sociological theory of knowledge”: “[m]ore than cultural systems, social formations resist the application of such a meta-theory” (1968, p. 689). The immediate implication of this is a disjunction between the institutional sense of the term “structure” (designating locations in the system of economic production) and what might be called, in keeping with Bourdieu's terminology, its meta-theoretical sense (which asserts the primacy of relations).<sup>4</sup> As a consequence, when Bourdieu turns to the topic of status groups, he will be unable to differentiate clearly between status properties and properties of position.

Bourdieu introduces the theme of status groups into the discussion in order to incorporate an additional dimension into the matrix of properties associated with class:

[a] social class is never defined solely by its situation and by its position in a social structure . . . ; we must also number among its properties the fact that the individuals who compose it deliberately or objectively enter into symbolic relations which, in expressing differences of situation and position according to a systematic logic, tend to transmute them into *significant distinctions* (Bourdieu, 1966, p. 212).

The approach to status groups is familiar from *Distinction*: cultivated consumption practices are said to transfigure mere possession of a thing into a symbolically inflected action; whereas the object may be alienable – and its possession therefore considered accidental – the “art of consuming well,” “an inimitable form of rarity,” appears as “an essential property of the person” (Bourdieu, 1966, p. 214). Varying by class, these practices – as they pertain to objects such as clothing, food, decor and the like – are asserted to signify class membership, but in a “transformed form.” And, as with *Distinction*, this transformation is asserted to dissimulate underlying relations of domination.

The question immediately arises as to how, exactly, status groups are related to classes, and more specifically, how this new, symbolic dimension relates to the initial notion of class, founded on the distinction between situation and position. This can be clarified if we consider some further remarks Bourdieu offers:

everything seems to indicate that Weber opposes class and status group as two types of *real* unities which would come together more or less frequently according to the type of society (that is to say, according to the degree of autonomy and domination of the economic order); [but] to give Weberian analyses all of their force and impact, it is necessary to see them instead as *nominal* unities which can capture [*restituer*] reality more or less completely according to the type of society, but which are always the result of a *choice to accent the economic aspect or the symbolic aspect* – aspects which always coexist in the same reality (in different proportions according to the particular society and across social classes within the same society), because symbolic distinctions are always secondary in relation to the economic differences that they express in transforming them (Bourdieu, 1966, pp. 212–213; my addition).

Class and status group are two aspects of the same “unity”; more specifically, status amounts to a symbolic “expression” of class. Here again, we find Bourdieu invoking the relational logic of negation – on more comfortable terrain in the symbolic arena – in order to provide a principle which is capable of accounting for the meaning of such practices (they are now explained in terms of the Saussurian notion of “value”). Moreover, we again find him claiming that the proportional weights that must be attributed to the two sides of the equation – in this case class (in toto) and status – are variable both across and within societies. It is therefore difficult to clearly differentiate status properties from properties of position, and more specifically, to conceive of the latter as a dimension of the “economic aspect” of the total “unity.” This confusion is only magnified by the fact that at least one of Bourdieu’s illustrations of positional properties actually refers to lifestyle differences (see 1966, pp. 206–207).<sup>5</sup>

Like properties of position, status properties are constrained within the limits of the class situation. These “material conditions of existence,” as Bourdieu refers to them, recall Marx’s description of the sphere of material production as a “realm of necessity.” In an ironic depreciation of the notion of the “free”

wage-labor contract, Marx contrasted to this a “realm of freedom,” understood precisely as the sphere of activity that stands outside of production, and in which the advance of “civilization” might take the form of an ever-greater satisfaction of culturally defined “needs” (1991, pp. 957–959). By yoking Marx’s “realm of freedom” to the Weberian notion of status groups, Bourdieu implicates it in the process of class domination.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, by insisting that the process in which symbolically mediated interpersonal relations give rise to social distinction has, as its condition of possibility, a material foundation, Bourdieu implies that the symbolic efficacy attributable to the practices of those trapped within the iron cage of necessity can only be understood privately: “the classes which are the most disadvantaged from the economic point of view never intervene in the game of . . . distinction, the form par excellence of the properly cultural game which is *objectively* organized in relation to them, though only as foil, or more specifically, as *nature*” (1966, pp. 222–223). Consequently, this game remains one for the privileged, carried on “within those privileged societies that can offer themselves the luxury of dissimulating oppositions of fact – that is to say, of force – beneath oppositions of sense” (Bourdieu, 1966, p. 223).

Within this theoretical construction, the notion of “properties of position” functions as a sort of ill-defined but essential intervening “level”: on the one hand, it prevents the symbolic domain from appearing as a simple reflection of those determinations wrought directly by underlying material reality, while also precluding, on the other, its absolute autonomy (where it would stand in for Marx’s counterfactual “realm of freedom”). However, given the disjunction between the senses in which Bourdieu speaks of “structure” (the institutional and the meta-theoretical), he is left to simply assert that the relational determination of both properties of position and status properties – and the enclosure of both within the same material limits – results in a “predisposition” to a “pre-established harmony”:

[n]othing would be more false than to believe that symbolic actions (or the symbolic aspect of actions) signify nothing other than themselves: they always express social position according to a logic which is the same as that of the social structure, that of distinction. Signs – which, insofar as they are “defined not positively by their contents but negatively by their relation with the other terms of the system,” and which, being only that which the others are not, obtain their “value” from the structure of the symbolic system – are predisposed by a sort of pre-established harmony to express the status “rank” which . . . owes its essential “value” to its position in a social structure defined as a system of positions and oppositions (Bourdieu, 1966, p. 215).

This claim elsewhere takes the form of an assertion that the two orders exhibit a “homologous” organization. Nevertheless, in the context of his aspiration to apply the relational mode of thought to both class and status, it is apparent that

Bourdieu is unable to identify a mechanism which can account for their postulated “harmony.” He lacks, in other words, a concept which would permit him to construe the “expression” of which he speaks as a form of *causality*. Bourdieu admits precisely this in his closing remark (which simultaneously reveals all of the ambiguities inherent in his use of the term “structure”): “[i]t is therefore a question of establishing how the structure of economic relations can, in determining the social conditions and positions of social subjects, determine the structure of symbolic relations which are organized according to a logic irreducible to that of economic relations” (Bourdieu, 1966, p. 223).

If we address this admittedly confusing essay from a retrospective vantage point, we can discern some of the conceptual clarifications that it necessitates. First, the emergence of the concept of cultural capital will enable Bourdieu to analyze cultural systems according to the logic of a resource, on par with economic capital (in that in it subject to monopolization and implicated in the regulation of access to social positions), rather than as a system of signification. The latter, in contradistinction, will be placed under the concept of “symbolic capital” (see Bourdieu, 1986). Specification of the various forms of capital will allow Bourdieu to more clearly differentiate the “being” of a class from its symbolically encoded “being-perceived,” to employ his later terminology (1990b, p. 135). Second, throughout many of Bourdieu’s writings on education, there will occur a more or less subterranean reflection on the nature of social causation. Ultimately, however, Bourdieu will be required to reconcile the meta-theoretic and institutional notions of structure – a conceptual development which is announced programmatically at various points in the early 1970s (for example, Bourdieu, 1991b, pp. 163–170), but which is fully executed only in *Distinction*.

#### IV. EDUCATION AND THE FACETS OF CLASS MEMBERSHIP

If we undertake even a brief survey, we find that Bourdieu’s studies of education have been punctuated, from the start, by a consideration of the manner in which the concept of class can (and should) be utilized for explanatory purposes. Thus, in an essay published in 1965 on the role of “linguistic misunderstanding” in the classroom, Bourdieu and his associates take up the significance of the fact that, at the higher levels of educational system, social class origin becomes a weak predictor of academic performance, while previous academic attainment functions more powerfully. This leads them to following assertion:

we should not see in social background simply the first link in a chain of causal connections. On the contrary, it is wholly in each of its mediations that class asserts its influence.



Only by abstraction can we refer, for example, to “the student” or to the student child of the worker or even (as in multivariate analysis) to the student child born of working-class parents and taking Latin or Greek [i.e. a particular curriculum]. From the situation of a working-class child, we may be able to understand what it means to him to be studying Latin or not studying it, to be attending a teachers’ college or a *petit séminaire*, to become a philosophy teacher or an experimental psychologist. But we cannot reassemble this or that experience from whichever one happens to be taken as the key to the whole. The real experiences described by these abstractions assume concrete, unitary and meaningful form only thanks to the fact that they are constituted by the class situation, the point from which every possible view unfolds and upon which no single point of view is possible (Bourdieu, Passeron & de Saint Martin, 1994, pp. 55–56; my addition).

In reading this passage, we should not, in my view, interpret the notion of “class situation” as it is used here according to the sharp distinction upon which the previous essay was based (i.e. in opposition to class position); rather, in this context it can be taken to denote the *totality* of class-specific properties. Indeed, as will become clear, Bourdieu’s early writings on education exhibit some of the same confusions as the essay on class and status, but magnified by the attempt to conceptualize the educational system precisely as a causal mechanism.

The most important aspect of the preceding remark lies in the attempt to rule out the view according to which – within the context of a biography – the significance of class membership is exhausted once “primary socialization” has occurred, and after which *discrete* causal factors, such as education, exert their influence. The alternative view of the relation between class and educational outcomes to which Bourdieu and his associates adhere remains somewhat nebulous; however, I believe that its meaning might be at least partially captured with a visual metaphor: just as (according to phenomenology) a perceptual object can only be grasped by apprehending the multiplicity of profiles through which it presents itself – and, indeed, ultimately amounts to nothing more than the unity of all possible profiles – the “class situation” is to be understood as a sociological object “upon which no single point of view is possible.” The metaphor would thus seem to suggest that some of the properties associated with or constitutive of class membership vary or change over the course of the biography, *but without forfeiting their class-specific identity*. (This, as I read it, is the meaning of the oblique reference to “mediations” in the above quotation.) The “properties” at issue are, above all, cultural ones, and the implication is that the secondary socialization effected by the educational system, and the acculturation thereby “acquired,” are not neutral with respect to class origin. The net effect of such a conception is an expansion of the phenomena which are opened up to explanation in terms of class, and correlatively, a meta-theoretical assertion of the primacy of class *qua explanans* (“the point from

which every possible view unfolds”). At the same time, however, if it is the case that the properties associated with or constitutive of class are in some sense variable, it is now necessary that they be theoretically re-specified in every instance in which class is to be mobilized for explanatory purposes; moreover, it also becomes incumbent on class analysis to register the nature of these variations, and to provide an account of the identity which holds them together. Bourdieu and his associates do not go very far here in working out these implications. However, when Bourdieu and Passeron re-analyze the same data in *Reproduction*, they attempt to develop a more detailed model.

The latter text has at its disposal a full-blown concept of cultural capital, thus setting it apart from the treatment of culture developed in the essay on class and status. Indeed, when referring to cultural systems here, Bourdieu and Passeron make liberal use of notion of the “arbitrary,” with obvious Saussurian resonances; nevertheless, the “relations” at issue with respect to cultural capital are not those which establish the identity of particular elements (“‘value’ in the linguistic sense”), but those which establish their relative efficacy as resources. Thus, under the assumption that any society recognizes a particular culture as legitimate, Bourdieu and Passeron assert that the “value” (in an economic sense) of the “cultural goods” transmitted by the family is a strict function of their proximity to or distance from those which are dominant in the society. They view this transmission in terms of both particular cultural contents and a particular relation to culture. The “material conditions” present in the initial familial milieu will foster the emergence of a detachment from or submersion in the practical necessities of everyday life, resulting in specific cultural competences and in a specific orientation towards culture in general. These, in turn, will be implicated in educational outcomes.<sup>7</sup> With this concept in hand, the earlier analysis can be further developed. In the process, Bourdieu and Passeron also lay out a diagrammatic model of the class-specific characteristics attaching to individuals in their movement through the educational system, and the causal processes these characteristics imply (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, pp. 71–89, 255–259).

The major refinement they introduce lies in their assertion of the need to undertake both “synchronic” and “diachronic” analysis, or in other words, to relate “structure” to “process.” With the former term in these pairs, they refer to those factors which are evident at a given stage in the educational process and serve to explain outcomes at the next stage – that is, to the set of properties which are causally operative at a given moment in the educational career. These are primarily capital and ethos (a term similar to habitus, in that it is meant to account for subjective preferences which evidence an objective logic). The diachronic analysis, by contrast, is meant to take account of the fact that

the variations in capital and ethos apparent within the total school population at any particular stage are themselves the result of previous causal processes. Specifically, these variations are seen to result from the earlier institutional selection and the channeling of students (into particular curricula and disciplines). The empirical argument which Bourdieu and Passeron want to make with this distinction is roughly as follows: although at earlier stages of the school career, the family's economic capital serves as the best predictor of success from one stage to the next, its explanatory significance declines over the course of the career, while the individual's cultural capital takes on greater significance; the distribution of cultural capital at one of these later stages, however, is itself the consequence of (above all) the differential elimination rates of individuals who entered the system from the various classes. Therefore,

[i]t is . . . necessary to construct the theoretical model of the various possible organizations of all the factors capable of acting, if only by their absence, at the various moments of the educational career of children in the various [class] categories, in order to be able to inquire systematically into the discontinuously observed or measured effects of the systematic action of a particular constellation of factors. For example, . . . to grasp the specific form and the efficacy of factors such as linguistic capital or ethos at a given level of education, each of these elements has to be related to the system in which it belongs and which represents at the moment in question the retranslation and relaying of the primary determinations linked to social origin.

Social origin, with the initial family education and experience it entails, must therefore not be considered as a factor capable of directly determining practices, attitudes and opinions at every moment in a biography, since the constraints that are linked to social origin work only through the particular systems of factors in which they are actualized in a structure that is different each time. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, pp. 87–88; my addition).

The basic theory which emerges from Bourdieu and Passeron's slightly smothering language – and which links this analysis to the rest of the book – is, again, that the educational system does not mediate between social origins and social destinations as an *autonomous* causal factor. Rather, through “pedagogical action” exerted on a population that is continuously subject to differential selection and channeling, it *constitutes* a set of causal factors which, while not operative or even present in the initial (familial) class milieu, are nevertheless not independent of it – the foremost of these being scholastic cultural capital. It is this premise which forms the basis of their contention that the factors which are operative at different stages of the career all amount to “retranslations” of the initial class situation, or (in the diagram) to “transformed forms” of the “system of class determinations,” and thus to the multi-faceted view of class announced earlier.<sup>8</sup> And it is this assertion, in turn, which allows them to ultimately postulate the “functional duplicity” of the educational system – that is, its ability to satisfy an “external imperative” merely by fulfilling its “internal function” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, pp. 177–219).<sup>9</sup>

A number of ambiguities emerge from these remarks which are pertinent to Bourdieu's later works. First, as with the earlier analysis of this data, Bourdieu and Passeron continuously utilize demographic variables – primarily sex and place of residence – along with social class for explanatory purposes. In the diagram, these appear to be interpreted as correlates (in some sense) – but not constituents – of class membership. As such, their explanatory function, and specifically, the nature of their relation to class, remains unaccounted for, resulting in an equivocation that is particularly striking in light of the attribution of meta-theoretical primacy to class, which is reiterated almost verbatim in this text (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 89). Secondly, Bourdieu and Passeron offer numerous critical comments pertaining to the inappropriate use of “multivariate analysis,” or to the inappropriate use of particular statistical techniques. Hence, for example, the indiscriminate use factor analysis is condemned on the grounds that it merely results in a “synchronic cross-section” of the relations between pertinent variables, and thereby “eliminates all reference to the genesis of the ensemble of . . . relations it is dealing with” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 88). At the same time, the analysis of their own data never extends beyond the interpretation of crosstabulations (albeit ones generated with multiple controls in order to identify particular sub-populations). Thus, the critical remarks are accompanied by little that might point towards their conception of an appropriate employment of quantitative data. Thirdly, the key terms “structure” and “system” are used ambiguously. On the one hand, these terms designate the relations between the factors that are operative at a given stage of the educational career – in other words, they designate the synchronic aspect of the causal model. On the other hand, when referring to the total model (i.e. in both its synchronic and diachronic dimensions), Bourdieu and Passeron will invoke – on the same page (1990, p. 87) – the Althusserian terminology of “structural causality” and make reference to the total “system of factors.” Again, the meaning of the terminology is not well-defined beyond its negative references – that is, its claim of the need for a model which, rather than treating the various factors at work over the course of a career as “substantial” and “isolable,” encompasses even the action of those which are “absent” at a given point in the career.

The diagrammatic model reveals some additional ambiguities. It is constructed from a biographical vantage point: the “material conditions” characteristic of the initial milieu are associated with a specific cultural “inheritance” and a particular ethos; these factors, in turn, determine the probabilities of the various educational outcomes at each stage of the career, while being continuously “retranslated” and “transformed” along the way. The eventual result is a class-specific destination. However, having specified the nature of educational

mechanism in detail, Bourdieu and Passeron merely gloss the meaning of this destination, describing it as a “position in economic and social structures, particularly in the various fields of legitimacy and in [the] power structure” (1990, p. 259). Consequently, as with the essay on class and status, these “positions” and “structures” remain ill-defined – indeed, here they receive no attention whatsoever.<sup>10</sup> We are thus left to impute to them a more or less traditional sociological meaning. Because the *substantive* nature of the class structure falls outside of the purview of the analysis, it is difficult not see in the conceptualization of cultural capital (and its certification) precisely a theory of social reproduction; but this being the case, the essential foundation of the “structure” which is being reproduced would appear to be strictly economic.

### DISTINCTION AS CLASS ANALYSIS

By the time he wrote *Distinction*, Bourdieu had filled out his basic conceptual repertoire, so that “habitus” and “capital” were complemented by “field” as central terms. In keeping with some of the programmatic statements made in the 1966 essay, the text sets as its immediate goal the explanation of differences of lifestyle. “Lifestyle” is interpreted quite widely, so as to encompass not only mundane, “ordinary” consumption practices, but also “extraordinary” ones (those pertaining to art, literature, etc.); indeed, because these are oriented to objects comprising the “legitimate culture,” they form an essential aspect of the analysis. Within the context of this project, Bourdieu again attempts to defend the thesis that lifestyle differences amount to “sublimated” expressions of class differences, which in turn account for their patterning. Given this explanatory intent, the analysis has two aspects: the treatment of “objective class” and the treatment of status group (or “symbolic class”). In the following I would like to devote extensive consideration to the former, on the grounds that it has received less attention in the secondary literature than has Bourdieu’s approach to lifestyle, and more specifically, because it condenses, in a less than obvious manner, positions on the nature of causation, on the explanatory logic associated with this view of causation, and on the methodological techniques which can most appropriately put such a logic into practice – positions which thus should be seen as solutions to problems that, as I have tried to suggest, had previously become acute. However, once we have clarified Bourdieu’s approach to these problems, I believe we will be able to deepen the understanding of the analysis of lifestyle (and indeed, of symbolic phenomena in general), thereby clarifying the meaning of a “sociology of symbolic violence.” In other words, much of Bourdieu’s post-*Distinction* work can be read as an extension of the basic standpoint developed in this text, and thus seen to rest – sometimes explicitly,

sometimes obliquely – on a class analytical foundation. Moreover, the broad viewpoint yielded by these discussions should allow us to situate Bourdieu, however sketchily, in relation to existing schools of class and stratification analysis; and it should also permit us to specify the rationale underlying his notoriously vexing treatment of the so-called “demographic” properties.

## V. OBJECTIVE CLASS: SOCIAL TOPOGRAPHY

In *Distinction* Bourdieu approaches the objective analysis of social structure by constructing a “social space” exhibiting a “chiastic” organization. This space is defined by three orthogonal axes: total volume of capital, composition of this capital, and trajectory (i.e. the transformation of volume and/or composition over time). The first axis thus differentiates between classes, and the second within classes (this is the context in which Bourdieu speaks of “class fractions”). The unit of analysis for the construction is a set of broadly defined occupational categories; the fact that the three axes are organized into a single space implies that each category is situated with respect to each of the axes. As a result, the occupational categories are positioned according to three parameters, and are thus receive spatial locations which can be interpreted in terms of their relative proximity and distance to one another.

Bourdieu utilizes correspondence analysis (a variant of factor analysis which operates with categorical data) to formulate the axes. As is indicated by some of the remarks which he and his associates proffered in the earlier studies of education, he considers the selection of statistical techniques to be a serious issue: when conceived of in merely technical terms, such procedures can often wind up concealing a commitment to particular “social philosophy” (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu, Chamboredon & Passeron, 1991, p. 254; see also Bourdieu, in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 113–114; Swartz, 1998, pp. 62–64). For Bourdieu, correspondence analysis amounts to the “relational” procedure *par excellence*, insofar as it spatializes the categories under analysis in terms of the attribute “values” (in a statistical sense) which distinguish them from other categories. This is because the

idea of difference . . . is at the basis of the very notion of *space*, that is, a set of distinct and coexisting positions which are exterior to one another and which are defined in relation to one another through their *mutual exteriority* and their relations of proximity, vicinity, or distance, as well as through relations of order, such as above, below, and *between*. Certain properties of members of the *petit-bourgeoisie* can, for example, be deduced from the fact that they occupy an intermediate position between two extreme positions, without being objectively identifiable and subjectively identified with one or the other position (Bourdieu, 1998a, p. 6).

Correspondence analysis analyzes property sets (discrete variables) by associating the properties of category occupants according to their over- or under-representation relative to a random distribution – that is, the frequencies with which the properties would appear within each occupational category if they were randomly distributed. Thus, insofar as a property set such as educational attainment is associated with occupation, one property from the set (e.g. a low-level educational credential) will be clustered with a particular occupational category (or group of categories), while a different property from the same set (e.g. a high-level credential) will cluster with a different category (or category group). As a statistical representation of the distribution of capital (in both its quantity and its type), the first two axes serve to capture those properties characterizing a social location which are the most fundamental in any explanation its occupants' practices.<sup>11</sup>

I would like to defer, for the moment, a consideration of the significance Bourdieu attributes to occupational categories as the basic unit with which to carry out class analysis. For now we can simply note that the conceptualization developed here at least serves to clarify the relation between class designations and these categories, which at times seemed to be interchangeable in Bourdieu's earlier work: classes are composed of occupational positions whose "inhabitants" tend to exhibit a similar volume of capital holdings; class fractions, in turn, are composed of positions which are differentiated from others within the same class by virtue of the particular capital which occupants tend to hold (or the ratio of capitals held). Beyond this, we must recognize that the model which results from the use of correspondence analysis – that of a multi-dimensional space – serves to effectively concretize the underdeveloped ruminations on the nature of a "social structure" which we found in the earlier work. Specifically, the constitutive role assigned to the concepts of "volume" and "composition" amount to an increase in the degree of abstraction with which Bourdieu approaches the class structure. In the earliest work, the economic domain – understood in terms of "occupational practices and the material conditions of existence" – is immediately set apart in toto from relational class properties, with the implicit result that the re-formulation of the notion of "structure" cannot break out of a culturalistic mold. In the educational writings, by contrast, possession of cultural capital apparently sits in one-to-one relation with possession of economic capital, and thus to function as an essential but nevertheless adjunctive "tool" by means of which the distribution of the latter is reproduced; the "hierarchy" of positions to which cultural capital and the education system regulate access, in other words, has all the appearances of a more traditionally construed economic structure. In this context, the shift to an explication in terms of capital "volume" and "composition" is significant because it breaks apart straightforward

identifications of the class structure with one or another (theoretically privileged) form of capital.<sup>12</sup> Following from this, the earlier distinction between class position and class situation (or “class condition”) is transformed. Here, each relationally-defined position corresponds to a “relatively homogeneous” class situation, which in turn tends to “inculcate,” in Bourdieu’s terminology, a class-specific (or fraction-specific) habitus. Consequently, situational properties – those stemming from the “conditions of existence” associated with a certain location – may retain a genetic (or biographical) primacy with respect to relational properties. But it is only through “properties of position” – those which reveal the structural relations between different positions – that the different class conditions can systematically take on *relative* significance. Bourdieu states:

[e]ach class condition is defined, simultaneously, by its intrinsic properties and by the relational properties which it derives from its position in the system of class conditions, which is also a system of . . . differential positions, i.e. by everything which distinguishes it from what it is not . . . This means that inevitably inscribed within the dispositions of the habitus is the whole structure of the system of conditions, as it presents itself in the experience of a life-condition occupying a particular position within that structure (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 170–182).

The distinction between class condition and class position thus no longer corresponds to that between the social and the cultural or to the differentiation of social origins and social destinations (that is, it is not tied to the biographical life-course). Rather, it is here shorn of substantive content, and instead becomes purely epistemic: condition and position amount to different views of the *same* “object.” The former describes the first-person experience of “membership” in a particular occupational category, and specifically, of the necessities and freedoms which it “imposes” on agents, the pressures or “facilities” which it entails. The latter, by contrast, focuses not on the impositions to which the occupant of such as location is subject, but on the relations which differentiate this location from others; it thereby reveals it precisely as a position within a structure. Because they describe different aspects of the same “object,” these two views can occasionally be collapsed – as when Bourdieu speaks of a “system of conditions.”

This being said, we must still get clear about the status of Bourdieu’s “social space.” The model that he constructs does not, in and of itself, represent a causal process: it is, literally, a *map*. To be sure, this model will be invoked for explanatory purposes, on the assumption of a process which flows from the social structure, via the habitus, to particular practices – practices which, in turn, are to be evaluated according to the contribution they make to the conservation or transformation of the initial structure (see Bourdieu, 1984, p. 171). Indeed, when Bourdieu superimposes diagrams depicting differences of lifestyle



on top of those depicting social space in order to demonstrate their homologous arrangement, there is clearly an implied causal relation – and at one point he asserts that between these two, there should be a third set of diagrams which capture the different “generative formulae” (i.e. habitus) through which the occupants of the correlative positions orient their practices (1984, p. 126). Nevertheless, Bourdieu’s correspondence analyses are not confirmatory, and his account of the causal relations which result in the observed homologies occurs in a different context. This means that – given the broad meta-theoretical assumption of a process connecting structure, habitus, and practice – it remains to be seen how causal relations between the social structure and particular, empirical practices are to be modeled sociologically.

## VI. OBJECTIVE CLASS: STRUCTURE AND CAUSE

In order to relate particular, observable practices (such as those constitutive of lifestyle) to the social structure, Bourdieu must be able to invoke the latter as a causal factor (or set of factors). Since the structure is essentially delimited in terms of volume and composition of capital (and secondarily, their change or stability over time), it is these which are primarily expected to account for particular practices at the empirical level, and which therefore form the basis of his explanatory models. However, Bourdieu complicates this schema. For in the process of elaborating his explanatory principles, he quickly launches into a discussion of the role of so-called “secondary properties” in determining practices. The term is used to refer to what we have previously labeled “demographic factors” – primarily sex, place of residence, and age (race and ethnicity are mentioned in passing, but do not figure in the analysis).

Bourdieu’s assertion is that while the socially current definition of an occupation may be expressed in purely technical terms, this definition often functions as a tacit barrier which serves to exclude those characterized by certain demographic properties. Thus, for example, educational criteria, construed as a technical requirement for a given occupation, may actually effect a type of informal closure by largely disallowing the entry of women (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 105). More generally, because factors such as a certain sex-ratio or age-ratio may contribute to the determination of the place which a particular job occupies in the class structure, it is not sufficient merely to account for the manner in which such factors may influence practices; it is also necessary *include* them in the definition of the classes themselves. Bourdieu summarizes his argument in a remark that has become notorious: “[s]exual properties are as inseparable from class properties as the yellowness of a lemon is from its acidity: a class is defined in an essential respect by the place and value it gives

to the two sexes and to their socially constituted dispositions” (1984, p. 107). This premise, on the one hand, appears to immediately bring Bourdieu’s analysis into a greater proximity to certain schools of stratification analysis in which the different stratifying factors are asserted to coalesce into a single formation; on the other hand, however, it is also the source of much of the consternation expressed by those who perceive a sort of class-analytical imperialism precisely in his propensity to pull all such factors into the orbit of social class.<sup>13</sup> We will take up the question of where Bourdieu’s position stands in relation both to stratification theory and to “purer” forms of class analysis later. In the meantime, I would like to address the manner in which Bourdieu incorporates this plurality into his definition of objective class. At the beginning of the discussion, we find a remark reminiscent of statements made in earlier writings on education:

[s]ocial class is not defined by a property (not even the most determinant one, such as the volume and composition of capital) nor by a collection of properties (of sex, age, social origin, ethnic origin . . .), nor even by a chain of properties strung out from a fundamental property (position in the relations of production) in a relation of cause and effect, conditioner and conditioned . . . (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 106).

The relation of the primary properties (those pertaining to capital) to the secondary properties is not a causal one. Indeed, the secondary factors are not “external” to the class structure, but instead “belong to it.”<sup>14</sup> At the same time, classes are also not to be viewed as mere aggregates of these various properties. It is the course of explaining these strictures that we find Bourdieu, once again, summoning the language of “structural causality” (1984, p. 107); here, however, I believe that this terminology takes on a reasonably clear meaning.

For Bourdieu (whose opinion of Althusserian class theory is well known), the notion of “structural causality” counts more as a motif than as the paragon premise which Althusser sought. Indeed, throughout his early work Bourdieu insists that the utility of structuralism can be maintained only insofar as its appropriation develops the explanatory program of the social sciences. Given this, I believe that we can interpret Bourdieu’s utilization of the concept as an *empiricist redefinition* of the structuralist axiom. Its “empiricist” character derives from the fact that it does not postulate a single set of “elements” which are *a priori* constitutive of any possible social formation (see Althusser & Balibar, 1975, pp. 204, 225; Poulantzas, 1978, pp. 25ff., 94–95). Bourdieu’s redefinition becomes apparent in the statement that it is “the structure of relations between all the pertinent properties which gives it specific value to each of them and to the effects they exert on practices” (1984, p. 106). Such an assertion – reminiscent of those from *Reproduction*, to be sure – takes on greater clarity in this context, precisely because it can be applied to a clearly

identifiable set of concrete factors.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, if we understand the term “value” in a statistical sense, an interpretation can be suggested according to which the effect of any factor on an outcome (i.e. a particular practice) is itself a function of the effects exerted by all of the other factors. Bourdieu’s proposition, in other words, implies that the plurality of factors are related to one another according to the principle of *causal interactivity*. We might thus read Bourdieu’s statements on causation as an affirmation of MacIver’s criticism of the “mechanistic fallacy”: social science errs, MacIver suggests, when it “treats the various components of a social situation, or of any organized system, as though they were detachable, isolable, homogeneous, independently operative, and therefore susceptible of being added to or subtracted from the causal complex, increasing or decreasing the result by that amount” (1964, p. 94). It is precisely this criticism, it seems to me, which Bourdieu himself proffers, albeit more tersely, when he denounces “the false independence of so-called independent variables” (1984, p. 103). It is further apparent in his assertion of the need “to break with *linear thinking*” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 107) – which here seems to refer to the construction of *additive* models.<sup>16</sup>

The map of the social structure which Bourdieu constructs is thus seen here as an *empirical system of interacting factors*. The system is – or should be – heterogeneous, in the sense that it includes both the primary properties (those pertaining to capital) and the secondary ones (the demographic properties). The properties only become factors – that is, they only become determinative – in interactive combination, or in Bourdieu’s earlier language, when the effect of each is “mediated” by the effects of all of the others. However, as the very designations he uses make clear, Bourdieu does not ascribe an equal causal efficacy to these sets of factors: volume and composition of capital do not exert their effects in independence from the effects of gender, age, etc.; nevertheless, the factors pertaining to capital are “the most determinant” in the system. Indeed, at one point Bourdieu also declares that “volume and composition of capital give specific form and value to the determinations which the other factors (age, sex, place of residence, etc.) impose on practices” (1984, p. 107).<sup>17</sup> Although it is difficult to know exactly how to decipher this statement, it seems to me that Bourdieu is here asserting an interpretive postulate. In general, the relation between interactive factors can be “read” both “forwards” and “backwards” – such that, for example, gender may be seen to condition the effect of education on income, *or* education may be seen to condition the effect of gender. Given this formal reversibility, the notion that the factors pertaining to capital “give form” to the effects of gender, age, and the like implies the *meta-theoretical* priority of a particular interpretation: the so-called secondary factors are to be seen

as *moderators* of the effects exerted by the primary factors.<sup>18</sup> It is this premise – the assertion of a “causal primacy” claim, in the language of Wright, Levine, and Sober (1992) – which drags the non-occupational bases of stratification and domination into the orbit of social class, and which, ultimately, confers a “secondary” status upon them. The reasons underlying this premise will be considered below.<sup>19</sup>

The final dimension of Bourdieu’s reflections on the nature of causality is perhaps the most crucial. In order for the notion of class to serve in an explanatory capacity, it is not sufficient to expand the set of properties which it encompasses or to re-conceptualize the nature of their causal action. Bourdieu further maintains that the (relative) causal “weight” of each particular factor varies according to context – that is, according to the “field” in which the practice to be explained occurs. The importance of this claim derives primarily from the fact that different “sub-species” of the various capitals can be identified. Thus, in the case of an object which (like lifestyle) is composed of multiple, heterogeneous practices, scholastic cultural capital may be more powerful in one arena (e.g. philosophical preferences), while inherited cultural capital is more effective in another (e.g. food preferences):

[i]n practice, that is, in a particular field, the properties . . . which are attached to agents are not simultaneously operative; the specific logic of the field determines those which are valid in this market, which are pertinent and active in the game in question, and which, in the relationship with this field, function as a specific capital – and consequently, as a factor explaining practices. This means, concretely, that the social rank and specific power which agents are assigned in a specific field depend firstly on the specific capital they can mobilize, whatever their additional wealth in other types of capital . . . (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 113).

We can recognize here an image similar to the one that we examined in *Reproduction*: Bourdieu is re-working the notion of a system of causal factors which shifts its “configuration,” such that certain factors may be “absent” in a particular context.<sup>20</sup> Here, however, the need to develop a theory of causality has been separated from the problem of reconciling “structure” and “process” (which is dealt with in separate conceptual step). The result of this is yet another source of consternation: for on the basis of the notion of a causal system comprised of *varying profiles*, Bourdieu is attempting to buy the flexibility necessary to claim that the diversity of social practices are subject to a “complex” but *unitary* explanation, and thus to accord class the role of explanatory principle *par excellence* (1984, pp. 113–114). In this manner, we may infer, he is able simultaneously to satisfy the meta-theoretical impulse to affirm the explanatory priority of social class, and the epistemic impulse that prioritizes scientific parsimony.<sup>21</sup>

## VII. THE EXPLANATORY FUNCTION OF OBJECTIVE CLASS

The causal action of the factors constitutive of class has as its result the habitus; the latter, in other words, is to be understood as an *effect* of the class structure. At the same time, the habitus also *generates* meaningful practices. It is, so to speak, structure “converted” to sense. This “conversion,” in turn, is understood in terms of a set of “conditionings” imposed by the “conditions of existence” which the agent experiences, and which are merely the flip-side of his or her structural position (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170). In what follows I do not intend to undertake a systematic explication of the concept of habitus, much less an evaluation; instead, I wish to sketch the place it occupies in Bourdieu’s sociology only to the extent that is necessary in order to develop the question here under consideration – namely, the explanatory project which he pursues. Taylor has provided a useful summary of the notion of habitus (1993). Taking up the puzzles surrounding the question of what it means to “follow a rule,” he insists that the habitus be conceptualized as a form of embodied understanding. It thus designates a relation between agent and world which is primarily non-cognitive, but which cannot be reduced to a stimulus-response model. Taylor further suggests, following Bourdieu’s own terminology, that the habitus should be viewed as a kind of abstract, “formulaic” worldview, but only so long as it is clear that the “formulae” do not (and cannot) dictate their own application. This implies, among other things, that they are “transposable” – that is, they may potentially be “realized” in an infinite variety of contexts.<sup>22</sup> With respect to the question of class, what must be stressed is the fact that, *qua* result, the habitus is variable across agents.

The explanation of practices is not exhausted by tracing them back to the generative habitus, and this, in turn, to the class structure. As we noted above, every practice is undertaken within a specific social context, which Bourdieu refers to as a “field” (and which is not to be confused with the here-and-now of the action “situation”). In the case of consumption practices, this encompasses such mundane activities as selecting a beverage (French wine or German wine, etc.) or a preferred literary genre (high modernism or science fiction, etc.). Fields present agents with a “space of possibles.” The various “possibles” take on an objective status vis-à-vis the agent. Hence, they exert a *constraint*, delimiting the range of legitimate choices; at the same time, however, they are also *enabling*, presenting the agent with a set of available options (see Bourdieu, 1995, pp. 234–239; 1984, pp. 230–231). It is precisely because of the additional influence exerted by these spaces that – at least in the case of a “composite” object which, like lifestyle, incorporates practices situated in a

multitude of different fields – the causal action exerted by class must be seen to shift its “profile” according to the limitations and options pertaining to each particular practice. And it is also in light of this that Bourdieu, not unreasonably, refers to practices as “overdetermined” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 107, *passim*; 1991a, p. 57). With some trepidation, I offer a graphic representation summarizing the various relationships implicated in the explanation of consumption practices (Fig. 1).<sup>23</sup>

I would like to consider more closely some issues concerning the place and function of objective class in this representation. To begin with, it must be acknowledged that Bourdieu does not make any attempt to quantify causal relations. In the first instance, this may appear to be the case because practices can only be accounted for by reference to the habitus – that is, in terms of the (typically non-cognitive) meaning they carry for agents; however, this fact, in and of itself, does not preclude *utilization* of quantitative techniques to model causality – a fact testified to by much of the sociological literature on cultural consumption, public opinion, etc. (often able to rely on relatively simple coding methods). Instead, the refusal to quantify appears to derive, at least in large part, from the “composite” character of the object. The diversity of practices associated with a particular habitus have, for Bourdieu, a quasi-systematic unity. This derives precisely from the fact that the habitus amounts to a single “generative formula” (or to a small set of such formulae), which is infinitely transposable according to the requirements of the field within which each practice is located and the particular situation within that field. Consequently, the habitus is capable of producing an infinite diversity of practices which are “phenomenally different,” but whose systematicity is open to reconstruction. This side of the explanatory project, however, is intrinsically *verstehend*: the semi-logical “unity” that connects an array of different practices can only be made evident semantically, through the apprehension of a singular “principle” (or “practical philosophy”) from which they could derive their coherence (see Bourdieu, 1984, p. 173). According to the broad historical thesis argued in *Distinction*, which asserts the supersession of the normative dimensions of culture by the aesthetic in securing the stability of a class society (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 153–154, 310–311, 367–371, 384), these “formulae” tend to manifest themselves in class-specific regularities of *taste*.<sup>24</sup> In analyzing such regularities, Bourdieu demonstrates an impressive ability to reconstruct lifestyles out of qualitative observations and frequency tables recording information on the mundane activities of everyday life – an ability which Brubaker (1985, p. 768) and Vandenberghe (1999, p. 47) go so far as to declare “Proustian.” As an aspect of the explanatory project, this step is required precisely on the grounds that it is *only* in the semantic dimension that the mutual affinity of the

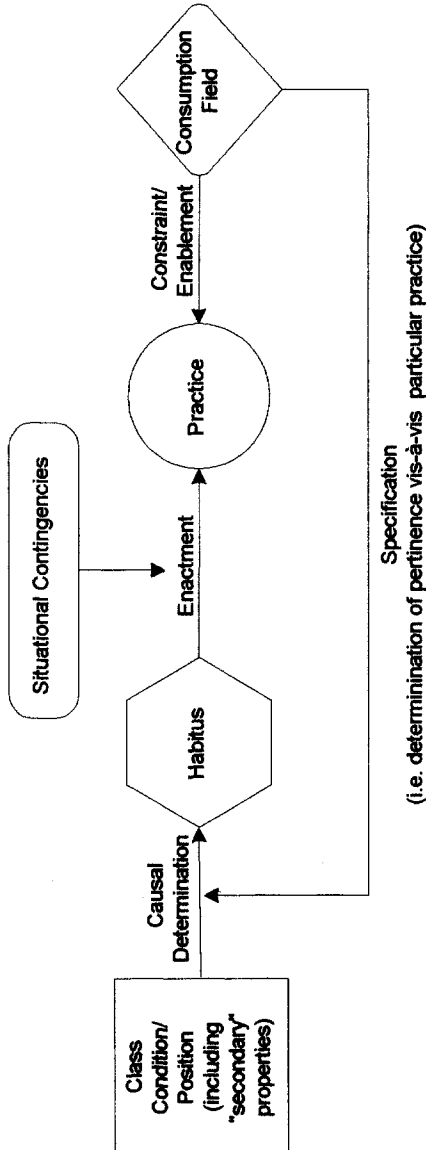


Fig. 1. Overdetermination of Consumption Practices.

multiplicity of practices constitutive of a style of life can be grasped without resorting to a mechanical theory of economic determination (see Bourdieu, 1984, p. 375).<sup>25</sup>

However, the “interpretive” reconstruction must itself be contextualized. Specifically, each of the practices constitutive of lifestyle stands in a field of “possibles”; consequently, the meaning of each is also qualified relationally – so that, for example, to routinely drink French wine is not to drink German wine, to read science fiction is not to read high modernist fiction, and so forth. Bourdieu, in other words, returns here to the Saussurian postulate: “interpretive” explication is necessary in order to discern the semantic unity inherent in practices situated across multiple fields; nevertheless, each practice obtains its own meaning in its difference (i.e. distinction) from the alternative practical possibilities. How is this possible? For Bourdieu, the habitus is itself a kind of “relational operator,” which realizes its own meanings primarily through a practical logic of opposition: “each life-style can only really be constructed in relation to the other, which is its objective *and subjective* negation” (1984, p. 193; my emphasis; see 1998a, p. 8). This means that the various lifestyles are not self-contained, but belong to a system – that is, they are elements of a symbolic structure, one which, though constantly undergoing re-generation and renewal in the flux of practices, has an objective or quasi-objective status. He thus declares that the habitus “continuously transforms . . . constraints into preferences, and, without any mechanical determination, . . . generates the set of ‘choices’ constituting life-styles, which derive their meaning, i.e. their value, from their position in a system of oppositions and correlations” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 175).

Clarification of this allows us to pose a further question: namely, how does Bourdieu undertake a verification of his causal hypotheses? Indeed, should they even be regarded as falsifiable? (Vandenberghe, 1999, p. 47, who ascribes to Bourdieu a “coherence” theory of truth, apparently thinks not.) Here we come upon another seemingly incongruous methodological procedure. While Bourdieu certainly does not clarify to the extent that we might wish, it would appear that the notion of verification with which he works leads him to present superimposed correspondence diagrams, whose validation of the causal theory is taken to lie in a demonstration of the isomorphic organizations of *explanans* and *explanandum* (1984, pp. 126–131, 258–263, 339; 1995, 233–234). In other words, assuming an adequate account of the meaning of the different lifestyle complexes – and of the associated habitus – verification entails the demonstration of a homology, in Bourdieu’s preferred language, between social structure and symbolic structure (see Appendix for a more detailed discussion). For this reason I believe that *Distinction* may be read as an attempt to provide



a solution to the problems – more epistemic and methodological than substantive – which lay at the heart of the 1966 essay on class and status group.

If this provides us with at least a broad sketch of the nature of the explanatory project in Bourdieu's sociology, it remains to be seen how the preceding reflections on causal interactivity relate to this project. Here again Bourdieu gives us relatively little to go on. Indeed, the supposition that variations in the factors cannot be taken to result in "incremental" differences between habitus remains vague, precisely because still quantitative. It basically implies (at a minimum) that differences on the secondary factors will be unique, or have unique consequences, for each configuration of volume and composition of capital. By and large, this aspect of the demonstration is restricted to the discursive (as opposed to statistical) level, in the description of within-class and within-fraction variations in habitus and practices attributable to variations in the secondary properties (primarily gender and age). It is apparent in various examples Bourdieu offers: men employed in typically feminine occupations, for instance, exhibit a divergence from the modal properties of the class, resulting in a "social identity deeply marked by this membership" (1984, p. 104).

The causal process associated with the class structure thus stretches from "substance" to "subject" to practice.<sup>26</sup> Because the effect of structure occurs only through this "conversion," however, the process of causation is complemented by a process of signification that extends, so to speak, in the opposite direction. Each of the elements of a lifestyle, as well as their totality, operates as a sign: it "expresses," in terminology which Bourdieu continues to use, an underlying class location. The various systems of lifestyle practices – conspicuous ostentation, pragmatic accommodation, and so forth – ultimately obtain social meaning only in their inter-negation; and according to the logic of taste, they obtain their hierarchical *rank* from the rarity of the underlying dispositions and competencies which they presuppose (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 224, 228). Consequently, there results a perfect or near-perfect correspondence between "values" – that is, between the "linguistic" and economic senses of the term – and lifestyles refer back to their social conditions of possibility (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 246; 1990b, p. 140). And this being the case, it is, as we will see, class members' distorted relation to the social world that confers upon the sociologist's causal models, above and beyond their quasi-hermeneutical moments, the function of deciphering an opacity.

## VIII. FROM THE IN-ITSELF TO THE (NOT QUITE) FOR-ITSELF

Practices are enacted by a habitus which is itself open to explanation in explicitly causal terms. We might therefore ask why the analysis is not completed

once this explanation has been carried out. Conversely, we might ask what place the famous theory of practice can have within the context of such a “strong” explanatory project. Bourdieu is, in fact, insistent that the symbolic dimension of practices makes a *causally irreducible* contribution to the constitution of classes. Before taking up the question of the symbolic, however, I would like to briefly return to the model of social space, in order to better delineate Bourdieu’s attempt to interweave “structure” and “agency.”

As was noted, this model – the map – is constructed by means of factor analysis, a technique that was earlier criticized on the grounds that it is strictly “synchronic” (see also Bourdieu, Chamboredon & Passeron, 1991, p. 47). In *Distinction*, this deficiency becomes, as Bourdieu often says, a virtue: unlike the type of model proposed in *Reproduction*, the “topography” presented here can be interpreted as a “cross-section” – that is, as an individual historical moment which has been “frozen.” As such, it amounts to a simplification, insofar as it implicitly asserts that the explanatory project does not necessitate capturing a multiplicity of successive temporal “stages” within a *single*, simultaneously structural, model. More importantly, when understood in this manner, the map can also be seen as a “balance-sheet,” in the sense that, by recording the momentary distributions of the different capitals, it delineates the outcome of the class struggle at a given moment in time, but also the point of its further departure, and the structurally delimited objectives of this continuation (that is, conservation or transformation). Bourdieu thus declares:

one must move beyond this provisional objectivism, which, in “treating social facts as things,” reifies what it describes. The social positions which present themselves to the observer as places juxtaposed in a static order of discrete compartments . . . are also strategic emplacements, fortresses to be defended and captured in a field of struggles (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 244).

A distribution, in the statistical sense but also the political-economy sense, is the balance-sheet, at a given moment, of what has been won in previous battles and can be invested in subsequent battles; it expresses a state of the power relation between the classes or, more precisely, of the struggle for the possession of rare goods and for the specifically political power over the distribution or redistribution of profit (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 245).

That the topographical model is essentially a synchronic representation is evident, above all, in the fact that immediately after constructing it, Bourdieu sets it in motion by providing an account which serves to record changes in the class structure occurring after the period in which the data “feeding” the model were collected (1984, pp. 132ff.). This discussion, which may initially appear as a digression insofar as it dispenses with questions pertaining to lifestyle, instead addresses the implications of recent alterations in the nature of the relation between credentials and jobs. Bourdieu here analyzes the actions

through which individuals directly attempt to conserve or improve their position in the class structure – credentialization, with its unintended inflationary consequences – and through which they attempt to transform that structure itself – which for him amounts to a veritable social construction of occupation (see 1984, pp. 141, 153; Bourdieu & Boltanski, 1981), and results in the emergence of professional “taste consultants,” “self-help” experts, and the like. The aggregative outcome of these individual (and familial) “strategies” is what Bourdieu terms a “displacement of the structure” (1984, pp. 156–168). From our perspective, the significance of these comments lies in their function of rendering apparent the fact that the model of social space is also meant to reveal the point of departure for various *competitive processes*.

This being the case, the most important aspect of the topographical model lies in the third axis (trajectory). In capturing the manner in which the relative volume and composition of capital that identify the structural position of an occupational category have changed over time – Bourdieu speaks of each fraction’s “modal trajectory” – it refines the meaning of the experiential “conditions of existence” that are associated with the position. Specifically, the model’s delineation of antecedent changes of relative position within the class structure permits Bourdieu to register the consequences of such changes on the formation of the habitus. Thus, in addition to helping differentiate positions which are otherwise identical (that is, which exhibit the same volume and composition of capital), the third axis facilitates an explanation of subjective anticipations (of ascent, descent, or stability), an essential aspect of the “reconversion strategies” which result in structural displacement.<sup>27</sup> These anticipations are also important to the explanation of lifestyles – especially in the case of the petty-bourgeoisie, with both its rising and declining fractions, and the consequent internal variations in its preference patterns. The third axis, in short, permits a *quasi-structural representation of time*, and hence frees Bourdieu from the overly elaborate type of model found in *Reproduction* (see also Bourdieu, 1995, p. 159).

Thus, the class structure can itself be viewed as a field upon which agents’ practices unfold.<sup>28</sup> However, in order to account for the specifically symbolic efficacy that these practices are able to deploy, we must establish how it is, according to Bourdieu, that they may come to be differentially appreciated. At the level of habitus, Bourdieu maintains, there exists a basic consensus which encompasses all members of the society. However, this does not take the form of an agreed upon set of values or the like; rather, it derives from the incorporation, by all those within the society, of a small number of structured schemes which are capable of orienting practice and the apprehension of others’ practices:

[a]ll agents in a given social formation share a set of basic perceptual schemes, which receive the beginnings of objectification in the pairs of antagonistic adjectives commonly used to classify and qualify persons or objects in the most varied areas of practice. The network of oppositions between high (sublime, elevated, pure) and low (vulgar, low, and modest) . . . is the matrix of all the commonplaces which find such ready acceptance because behind them lies the whole social order. The network has its ultimate source in the opposition between the “élite” of the dominant and the mass of the dominated . . . (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 468).

This set of collectively shared schemes comprises what Bourdieu elsewhere analyzes under the phenomenological motif of *doxa*, referring to a lifeworld background which is “natural” in the sense that it is taken for granted without any thematization, and therefore immediately given as such to its “inhabitants” (1977, pp. 163–171). However, and in keeping with the requirements of the concept of habitus – and more precisely, its social constitution – this *doxa* is said to exhibit *class- and fraction-specific inflections*. Consequently, when the production and apprehension of practices differentiates between lifestyles (and implicitly, therefore, between class positions), there results a “classificatory struggle.” In a trenchant example, Bourdieu writes that:

[t]he fact that, in their relationship to the dominant, the dominated classes attribute to themselves strength in the sense of labor power and fighting strength . . . does not prevent the dominant groups from similarly conceiving the relationship in terms of the scheme strong/weak; but they reduce the strength which the dominated (or the young, or women) ascribe to themselves to brute strength, passion and instinct . . . and they attribute to themselves spiritual and intellectual strength, a self-control that predisposes them to control others, a strength of soul or spirit which allows them to conceive their relationship to the dominated . . . as that of the soul to the body, understanding to sensibility, culture to nature (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 479, and see pp. 194–200).

The various class-specific “formulae” which *Distinction* extrapolates (petty-bourgeois “cultural goodwill,” the working class “taste for necessity,” etc.) are therefore merely the particular semantic garb with which each class or fraction clothes a small set of fundamental schemata that, when stripped bare, reveal the same hierarchical oppositions – oppositions which, however, have been construed in contrasting manners according to class position.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, this does not exhaust the significance of the phenomena that Bourdieu places under the notion of a “classificatory struggle.” In order to fully specify them, it is necessary that we return once more to the map of social space. The final feature of the map to require comment lies in the fact that volume and composition of capital, the primary parameters which define this space, are treated as *continuously* or *gradationally* distributed factors. A space which is defined by means of continuous parameters is, ipso facto, devoid of inherent boundaries. On occasion, Bourdieu seems to give the impression that his approach is warranted primarily on empirical or methodological grounds

(1987a, p. 15; 1991b, p. 120). However, this revocation of the discontinuous character of whatever distribution is taken to be at the basis of the social structure – upheld from Marx through Dahrendorf precisely as the hallmark of a *class* structure – must be understood in epistemic terms: Bourdieu has repeatedly insisted that theoretical studies of class which take up the “boundary problem” illegitimately transpose a *social concern* into the realm of sociology, and thus tend to import the social interests that inevitably come with it (1985, pp. 734–735). It is only by means of this proposition that Bourdieu is able to fully analyze the contribution which the symbolic dimensions of action make to the constitution of classes.

In order to identify this contribution, we may first note that the result of Bourdieu’s postulate is a massive, quasi-Durkheimian domain of analysis that takes as its object the formation of groups (above all, classes) precisely via strategic practices of *social demarcation*. More specifically, the introduction of *boundaries* into the continuous structure of social space is, *sui generis*, a function of practice; and it is only by virtue of this function – and the attendant differentiation of one set of agents from others – that social collectivities are formed. For Bourdieu, such boundaries are, above all, symbolic in nature – although they are not always exclusively symbolic.

When processes of group formation are situated at the “point of production,” the collectivities which are created by the demarcation of different regions of social space will have a more or less explicitly economic identity. Bourdieu has not devoted extensive attention to such cases; however, Boltanski’s (1987) study of the history of the French *cadres* may serve as an example. Bourdieu’s interest, by contrast, appears to be in cases in which the creation of boundaries results in group formation processes that follow the contours of the distribution of occupations across social space – in the sense that the members of a collectivity occupy *relatively* proximate locations within this space – while resting on a symbolically expressed identity that is not explicitly economic. In these instances, class formation occurs in a “sublimated” fashion. Status groups are the foremost example of this transmutation; however, various other types of group formation processes tend to accord – to a greater or lesser extent – with the occupational distribution or with a particular sector of it. Indeed, Bourdieu has devoted much of his attention to these sorts of phenomena, and because this work extends in several directions, it is helpful to distinguish some major orientations. As can be seen, the various boundary-establishing practices which he has analyzed differ in a variety of ways:

- The analysis of everyday consumption practices, which we have been following, takes up the issue of *pre-political* (in the narrow sense) – and

indeed, *pre-thematic* – class formation, by focusing on the relatively uncoded symbolic unification and differentiation of groups effected through lifestyle. “Distinctions” of this sort lack inherent durability because they are not, by and large, institutionally secured, and therefore are subject to continuous re-creation.

- The sociology of education shifts its focus somewhat in order to analyze: (1) the mechanisms (as much subjective as objective) by which the educational system sorts and sifts students, and (2) the symbolic effects of credentialization, which result from the introduction of qualitative discontinuities (“consecration”) into the continuum of cultural competences (see Bourdieu, 1996a, pp. 30–53, 102ff.). Because of the relation to occupations, in this domain, unlike the arena of lifestyles, demarcations are inscribed into an institutional “objectivity” – albeit with a time lag in some cases (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 154–155, 481; Bourdieu & Boltanski, 1981) – and thus, as we have seen, *directly* affect (whether by reproducing or transforming) the class structure itself.
- The sociology of political mobilization and political parties addresses practices in which the identification of group boundaries and processes of group unification occur thematically (located primarily in Bourdieu, 1991b; this topic is also touched on in some of the essays on the meaning of class – for example, 1987a, pp. 12ff.); such practices are often founded on differences which already exist in the “practical state” (i.e. lifestyle differences). These analyses are to a large extent taken up with the collision between the symbolic and political senses of “representation.”
- The sociology of the state enters Bourdieu’s field of vision at a relatively late point in time, and is only briefly sketched so far (1998a, pp. 35–63). It proceeds by modifying Weber’s formula, in order to define the state according to its monopolization of the legitimate use of “symbolic violence” – which is to say, according to the authority of the state to institute or at least adjudicate all systems of social classification which enjoy an *obligatory validity* (including educational credentials, but also census taxonomies, etc.). In this context, the notion of “officialized” category systems – which, in the studies of Kabylia, could refer simply to universally shared “collective representations” – are seen as having a specific type of social force that extends, in contradistinction to all others, beyond mere legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 744; 1998a, p. 54), as well as a particular institutional grounding. Closely associated with the sociology of the state, but not yet fully integrated with it, is Bourdieu’s analysis of law (1987b). Here, in large part, the focus is on obligatory rules and taxonomies which derive their legitimacy precisely from their formulation in abstract, logical, and generalized terms – that is, from their *form* (see also Bourdieu, 1990a, pp. 76–86; 1977, p. 188).

- With the Heidegger analysis (Bourdieu, 1991a) and the work on literature (Bourdieu, 1995), Bourdieu has undertaken research on different subsectors of the field of cultural production, which is itself understood as a sector of the class structure (see Bourdieu, 1991b, pp. 168–170). In these contexts, conflicts over boundaries follow their own dynamics – that is, they proceed according to their own “rules” and their own “stakes”; often, this means that, within a particular social microcosm, the categorical hierarchies which are current within (and oriented towards) the wider class structure are “reversed” or “inverted” (Bourdieu, 1995, pp. 81–84, 142–154, 223ff.). Moreover, at least in the case of artistic production, underlying positions are subject to a relatively weak degree of institutional circumscription. Conceptually, such studies seek to reconcile the existence of this sort of independent, internal logic with the fact that these microcosms remain susceptible to the effects of events occurring in the larger structure (Bourdieu, 1995, pp. 223–232).

In each of these arenas, the formation of classes and class fractions is the primary – but by no means the sole – consequence that may arise from practices which serve to *partition the social space*. Each is a site in which the so-called “classificatory struggle” transpires continuously.

Utilization of the collectively shared schemata of the doxa represents a paradigmatic example of the “fuzzy” logic of practice: indefinite (in “intension” and “extension”), the schemata leave a considerable room for maneuver in which the play of interests can work itself out according to the contingencies of the given situation (Bourdieu, 1990b, pp. 85–90). Moreover, even if the difference is ultimately only one of degree rather than type, it must be noted that the “classificatory struggle” takes a more radical form when practical sense is led by the interests stemming from its position to attempt a *modification* of the normal functioning of doxa – whether in its typical range of application, its content, or even its structure. Consequently,

[e]very real inquiry into the divisions of the social world has to analyse the interests associated with membership or non-membership. As is shown by the attention devoted to strategic, “frontier” groups such as the “labor aristocracy,” which hesitates between class struggle and class collaboration, . . . the laying down of boundaries between the classes is inspired by the strategic aim of “counting in” or “being counted in,” “cataloguing” or “annexing,” when it is not the simple recording of a legally guaranteed state of the power relation between the classified groups (1984, p. 476).

(We see, incidentally, that because they are codified, formalized, and obligatory, classificatory systems authorized by the state can have the effect of *constricting* the room for maneuver available to agents; nevertheless, the state itself also becomes the object and site of classificatory struggles for agents who

seek to monopolize this authority – whether on a permanent or temporary basis – in order to further what can only be termed their own “classificatory interests” (Bourdieu, 1996a, pp. 374ff.) Much of the contingency which characterizes classificatory practices derives precisely from the “complex” character of objective classes – that is, from the fact that they include both the primary and secondary properties. Thus, agents may implicitly seek to “overlook” a previously salient difference when they draw the limits of a group; they may tacitly alter the “criteria” by which they include or exclude others; or they may seek to invoke altogether different schemata.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, in certain instances agents may be inclined to explicitly deny the existence of any discontinuities whatsoever (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 137). In all of these cases, the doxa is stripped, to one degree or another, of its quasi-natural character, resulting, at least potentially, in the situation that Bourdieu analyzes – according to the motif of a “practical *époque*” (1991b, p. 128) – in terms of a play between orthodoxy and heterodoxy (1977, pp. 168–170).

Because he considers the primary social function of the symbolic dimension of practices to lie in this *power to unify and dissolve* social collectivities, Bourdieu is fond of referring to the classificatory “formulae” of the habitus as “principles of vision and division” (for example, 1987a, p. 7). The implication of his approach is that even when overt antagonisms are largely absent, the social formation is thoroughly pervaded by a type of “class” conflict:

[t]he capacity to make entities exist in the explicit state, to publish, make public (i.e. render objectified, visible, and even official) what had not previously attained objective and collective existence and had therefore remained in the state of individual or serial existence – people’s malaise, anxiety, disquiet, expectations – represents a formidable social power, the power to make groups by making the *common sense*, the explicit consensus, of the whole group. In fact, this work of categorization, i.e. of making explicit and of classification, is performed incessantly, at every moment of ordinary existence, in the struggles in which agents clash over the meaning of the social world and of their position within it, the meaning of their social identity, through all forms of benediction and malediction . . . (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 729).

From the perspective of class theory, Bourdieu’s insistence on the ubiquity of classificatory conflicts has interesting results. On the one hand, “class,” in its more or less conventional designation of economically (in the narrow sense) or occupationally founded groups, becomes merely one among other competing principles of unification and mobilization. Thus, gender, as another such principle, implies the attempt to construct a group identity that cuts across the structure of social space (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 107), and nationalism entails the construction of a collectivity that encompasses the entirety of this space (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 726; 1987a, p. 15). On the other hand, however, the



likelihood of success enjoyed by competing principles is itself conditioned by the social structure: the odds that a particular attempt at group formation will be effective are a function precisely of the *relative distance* in social space which separates the agents who are to be brought together (Bourdieu, 1985, pp. 725–726; 1998a, p. 11). Consequently, because the contours of the social space follow the structure of occupational positions, and the distance between agents therefore derives from their economic locations, “classes,” as economically founded groups, have a necessary, if only probabilistic, advantage in the competition between principles of construction – all other factors being equal. (We will take up later the reasons why this does not amount to a tautology.)

The analysis of “classificatory struggles” requires foregrounding here because it assumes the place that would ordinarily be occupied by the critique of ideology. Indeed, we might suggest that Bourdieu is unusual because he confers upon the Durkheimian tradition an equal or leading role in the theory and analysis of ideology (1985, p. 742). Be this as it may, we should not underestimate the social-constructionist twist with which he appropriates this tradition. Leaving aside for the moment the question of state-sanctioned taxonomies, we must note that the concept of the “success” of one or another competing classificatory scheme has a specific meaning: it implies a more or less universal *recognition* (even if taken for granted) of its validity (Bourdieu, 1991b, p. 170). The conflict between orthodoxy and heterodoxy is thus a “struggle for recognition.” Bourdieu conceives of such struggles – and recognition in general – according to the concept of “symbolic capital,” “commonly called prestige, reputation, renown, etc., which is the form in which the different types of capital are perceived and recognized as legitimate” (1985, p. 724). This is what he elsewhere refers to (in somewhat less individualistic terminology) as the “being-perceived” of a collectivity, in contrast to its “being” (1990b, p. 135). It amounts to a “symbolic [transfiguration] . . . of de facto differences” (1985, p. 731). As such, the notion of symbolic capital describes a process of recognition that confers *legitimacy* upon something arbitrary. In the first instance, this means simply the doxic adherence to a world that is socially differentiated: the actual, as Bourdieu likes to say, is not seen as particular case of the possible, that is, as a world which might be otherwise. Beyond the relation of tacit recognition there is also the explicit accord of legitimacy to orthodox breaks in social continua (“achievement,” “merit,” etc.) – a meaning which perhaps comes closest to the conventional usage of the term “ideology” (i.e. the “ruling ideas”). Ultimately, however, recognition implies an incognizance of the fact that all of the familiar partitions of the social world, with their vertical and horizontal arrangements, are the product of practices – that is, of the historical action of particular agents with

particular interests (1991b, pp. 169–170). And because it is founded on this incognizance, recognition is therefore also “misrecognition.”

It is thus clear why Bourdieu often speaks of an “alchemical” transformation of differences of position (that is, of differences of economic and cultural capital): “social magic always manages to produce [legitimate] discontinuity out of continuity” (1991b, p. 120; my addition). With respect to the analysis of lifestyle, this implies that differences are perceived precisely as differences of “style,” that is, as purely symbolic differences rather than economically derived ones, and that the relation which obtains between the agent and the canonized culture elides awareness precisely of the historical “labor of canonization.” With respect to the state, it implies that obtainment of the official recognition of boundaries can be a way of securing “advantages and obligations” – but only at the cost of a “labor of officialization” (1984, pp. 476–477). In all such instances, cultural and economic capital – one should add social capital, for the sake of completion – serve as the *resources*, mobilized through expenditure, for the constitution, maintenance, or transformation of distinctions; the *function* of such expenditures, “in the last analysis,” lies in their dissimulation of the monopolization of this capital itself, a part of which is expended in the process. The ability of individuals and groups to institute boundaries – whether durable and official, or diffuse and momentary – is thus *conditioned* by their social position (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 734; 1987a, pp. 11ff.); it remains, however, *irreducible* to the latter, on the grounds that between the symbolic order and the social order, there obtains a provisional autonomy:

[i]t is the relative independence of the structure of the system of classifying, classified words . . . in relation to the structure of the distribution capital, and more precisely, it is the time-lag . . . between changes in jobs, linked to changes in the productive apparatus, and changes in titles, which creates the space for symbolic strategies aimed at exploiting the discrepancies between the nominal and the real, appropriating words so as to get at the things they designate, or appropriating things while waiting to get the words that sanction them . . . (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 481).

It would thus seem to be the case for Bourdieu that the relative (analytical) autonomy of the symbolic, at least insofar as it does not lead to real insight, becomes a more or less effective mechanism for the perpetuation of (social) heteronomy.<sup>31</sup>

The notion of misrecognition, as Bourdieu uses it, results in an image according to which all those who occupy the throne are pretenders. We should not, however, take this to imply a theory of the transcendence of power, in the form of an “eternal recurrence” or the like (as noted by Wacquant, in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 52). Rather, we should return to Bourdieu’s correspondence models, and to the decision to render the parameters of social space

gradationally. For what is apparently no more than an innocuous decision concerning statistical technique actually serves as a device by means of which sociology is prevented from naturalizing social divisions. And because it amounts to a de-naturalization, the static, “synchronic” model ultimately imposes a historicist viewpoint upon sociological research, pointing it inevitably towards analysis of the “acts of institution” which underlie *all* social boundaries, and thereby effecting (at least in part) the “epistemic break” which Bourdieu considers so essential. In this manner Bourdieu’s sociology is transported out of the orbit of structuralism altogether.<sup>32</sup>

## IX. SOCIOLOGY AND CLASS ANALYSIS

If it is the epistemic significance of Bourdieu’s decision to construct social space gradationally that initially requires comment, we still must not lose sight of its substantive implications. These are not hard to specify. The postulate of a social order in which “ranks” – construed “objectively,” in terms of occupational positions, for example – are distributed continuously across a hierarchy with no clear boundaries is typically associated with certain versions of “stratification” theory developed primarily in the U.S. context. It is not necessary to review the myriad versions of this theory, nor to resurrect the often accusatory disputations in which class analysis and stratification analysis have confronted one another. For even if Bourdieu conceptualizes the structure of social space in terms of the volume and composition of “*capital*,” it should be clear that his model shares a familial resemblance with various forms of stratification analysis, one which undoubtedly sets it apart from nearly all structural theories of class (whether grounded in the concept of the relations of production, authority, etc.). At the same time, however, it is equally obvious that with the notion of a “classificatory struggle” – the notion, that is, of practices which are oriented towards an inscription of group-constituting boundaries into symbolic and institutional “objectivity” – Bourdieu wishes to re-connect with the more traditional concept of classes as conflict groups. These disparate affinities allow him to undertake yet another “reconciliation of opposites”:

[t]he opposition between theories which describe the social world in the language of stratification and those which speak the language of the class struggle corresponds to two ways of seeing the social world which, though difficult to reconcile in practice, are in no way mutually exclusive as regards their principle. “Empiricists” seem locked into the former, leaving the latter for “theorists,” because descriptive or explanatory surveys, which can only manifest classes or class fractions in the form of a punctual set of distributions of properties among individuals, always arrive after (or before) the battle and necessarily put into parentheses the struggle of which this distribution is the product (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 245).

As was stated earlier, I do not think that Bourdieu's decision to construe his model gradationally can be justified on purely empirical grounds. Be this as it may, it is clear that any attempt to situate Bourdieu's work with respect to class analysis implies, with equal necessity, the attempt to situate it with respect to stratification analysis.

In order to undertake the latter, let us briefly consider the approach developed by Lenski (1966). For Lenski, the notion of stratification denotes a system in which positions are ranked in a continuous hierarchy. Consequently, while the term "class" is retained, he concedes that any delimitation is ultimately arbitrary, and thus a matter of methodological or analytical convenience (Lenski, 1966, pp. 76, 79). From a Bourdieuean perspective, such an approach is insufficient not because it fails to appreciate the existence of first-order classificatory systems – Lenski makes reference to various "ideologies" – but because it does not acknowledge boundary-instituting practices as a fundamental form in which conflicts over the social structure itself are played out. It thereby fails to "reintroduce into the full definition of the object the primary representations of the object" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 135). Beyond this, Lenski takes account of the existence of multiple stratification orders – such as sex, age, religion, economic position – all of which exhibit the same unilinear organization, and thus sit side by side with each other analytically, however much they may overlap empirically. In this instance, the relation to Bourdieu's position is more complicated. On the one hand, Bourdieu insists strongly on the *singularity* of the "stratification order," as evidenced by his assertion that class constitutes a universal explanatory principle. This amounts to an avowal of the conceptual (and causal) primacy of economic location, and results in the "secondary" status of factors other than capital. In this, his stance is similar to that assumed by Parkin, who criticizes the "exaggerated claims regarding the functional independence of different aspects of inequality" put forward by Lenski, and instead affirms the centrality of the occupational sphere (1971, pp. 13–28). Moreover, for Bourdieu, this latter sphere is taken to extend beyond the domain of an economy founded on private property, in a manner reminiscent of Blau and Duncan's well-known statement:

[t]he occupational structure in modern industrial society not only constitutes an important foundation for the main dimensions of social stratification but also serves as the connecting link between different institutions and spheres of social life, and therein lies its great significance. The hierarchy of prestige strata...have their roots in the occupational structure; so does the hierarchy of political power and authority, for political authority in modern society is largely exercised as a full time occupation . . . (Blau & Duncan, 1967, pp. 6–7).

On the other hand, however, Bourdieu also insists that the distribution of "ranks" within this sphere exhibits a *multidimensional* arrangement. This decision –

undoubtedly motivated by an engagement with Marxism – opens his sociology to the analysis of a conflict dynamic altogether alien to stratification theory: that in which individuals and collectivities separated primarily by the composition of the capital they control vie to establish dominance.

Notwithstanding Bourdieu's dismay at the prospect of disquisitions on the relation to the "founding fathers," his work is far more difficult to situate with respect to the traditions of class analysis instigated by Marx and Weber. This does not derive solely from the perennial problem of isolating "core" propositions. Bourdieu himself does not seem to feel that the conceptual precision that might differentiate between traditions is particularly important. Thus, for example, in certain instances we find him attempting to yoke his vocabulary to something like a labor theory of value in order to account for the generic identity of the different forms of capital, while at other times he appears to be more comfortable with the language of power. Be this as it may, any such evaluation ultimately has to contend with the expanded definition of basic economic concepts ("capital," but also terms like "profit," "market," etc.) which is one of the hallmarks of his thought. Hence, to make a somewhat obvious point, a model of the class structure which envisions the polar extremes of the dominant class to lie in the opposition between commercial employers and industrialists, on the one hand, and artists and intellectuals, on the other, stands quite apart from one modeled strictly on the logic of commodity production (and in which, for example, industrial capital would be opposed to finance capital, etc.). And, while Weber's typology of contemporary "social classes" includes the "propertyless intelligentsia and specialists" among its ranks (1978, p. 305), it is not altogether clear whether this typology should be understood as the elaboration of an economic "structure" or of economically founded "groups." Beyond these basic considerations, however, I have little to add, except to state that I believe we must concur with Calhoun (1995, pp. 138–142), who finds in Bourdieu little place for a rigorous notion of *capitalism*, understood as a historically specific form of production in which qualitatively different activities are systematically related via units of an abstract measure of equivalence.<sup>33</sup> Correlatively, and despite occasional language to the contrary, Bourdieu's notion of capital(s) clearly has a "distributional" sense.<sup>34</sup>

Whatever the case may be, if we wish to place Bourdieu's work in relation to the arena of class analysis, however provisionally, then I believe a more fruitful approach might be to take up those concerns which he himself identifies as central. It is therefore instructive to return the post-*Distinction* articles that were discussed in section II (above), in which Bourdieu describes the constitutive antinomy that motivates his reflections on class:

contrary to the *nominalist realism* that cancels out social differences by reducing them to pure theoretical artifacts, one must . . . assert the existence of an objective space determining compatibilities and incompatibilities, proximities and distances. Contrary to the *realism of the intelligible* (or the reification of concepts), one must assert that the classes that can be separated out in social space . . . do not exist as real groups although they explain the probability of individuals constituting themselves as practical groups, in families . . . , clubs, associations, and even trade-union or political “movements” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 725).

We might thus read Bourdieu’s corpus in terms of a general orientation to the explanation of the classificatory practices through which social collectivities are “made and unmade” on the basis of the “existing” structure. Approached primarily from this perspective, I believe that the viewpoint from which he undertakes his analyses bears at least a partial resemblance to “structuration” theory, in the specific sense that Giddens gave this term in his early work on class (1973).<sup>35</sup>

For Giddens, like Bourdieu, the conceptual questions associated with class crystallize the problem of reconciling structure and agency. This largely stems from dissatisfaction with the Marxian distinction between the “in-itself” and the “for-itself.” Thus, stated in summary form, the central issue for class theory, in Giddens’ view, is that of relating “the capital/wage labor distinction on the one hand to the bourgeoisie/proletariat distinction on the other” (Giddens, 1980, p. 887). Put otherwise, the predominant theoretical problem is that of clarifying “the modes in which classes, founded in . . . [relationships and conflicts generated by the capitalist market], take on or ‘express’ themselves in definite social forms” (Giddens, 1973, p. 104). Indeed, it is only on the basis of a solution to this problem that any class may be considered a “historical, dynamic entity.” Giddens’ approach to the problem entails the utilization of various non-Marxian concepts to examine those contingent, empirical processes which intervene between a “structure” and particular class formations, between economy and society: on the one hand, there are the different sources of “market capacity” (private property in the means of production, skills, labor power), each potentially subject to monopolization and hence of serving as the basis for a form of closure, which result in the “mediate structuration” of classes; and on the other hand, there are various “localised” factors which, by virtue of potential “overlap,” may intensify or ameliorate these lines of closure, including the technical division of labor, patterns of organizational authority, and “evaluative categorisations based upon ethnic or cultural differences,” all of which together comprise “proximate structuration” (1973, pp. 109–112).

Like Giddens, Bourdieu is concerned to develop a sociological account of the relation between class structures and class formations which avoids what he takes to be the founding antinomy of Marxian class analysis – “a logic that

is either totally determinist or totally voluntarist” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 726). Nevertheless, in order to avoid confusion, the most important differences between them ought to be elaborated. As I see it, there are four of these:

- Because Giddens works with the more or less Weberian category of “market capacity,” the economic domain receives its parameters from the distribution of the different sources of this capacity (i.e. private property, skills, and labor power). In contrast, even if we interpret Bourdieu’s notion of capital in a “distributional” sense, the use of “volume” and “composition” as basic parameters results in a very different arrangement of (objective) classes, one which might be seen as a gain in abstraction on Bourdieu’s part. Put more clearly, Giddens’ use of the concept of “market capacity” results in a construction that can be considered “structural” only in a weak sense (the different sources of this capacity corresponding, respectively, to a potential “upper,” “middle,” and “lower” class (Giddens, 1973, p. 107)). Bourdieu’s approach, in contradistinction, is “structural” in a much stronger sense, insofar as the model he constructs is meant to locate all possible “asset configurations” within a set of *determinate objective relations*.
- Giddens understands the phenomena that may potentially reinforce the effects of closure in terms of “proximate structuration.” In the case of some of these phenomena, such as authority patterns, it may seem intuitive to presuppose some covariation with the distribution of the different sources of “market capacity.” However, as becomes particularly clear with respect to the technical division of labor and to “status” properties such as ethnicity, Giddens – who deploys the terminology of “overlap” and “superimposition” – views the different factors contributing to structuration as *analytically independent* of one another (1973, pp. 111–112; 1980). Therefore, in contrast to Bourdieu, the *interaction* of these factors would appear to remain an empirical contingency.<sup>36</sup>
- For Giddens, all capitalist societies are characterized by the various sources of mediate and proximate structuration. However, mobility opportunities may be more or less closed in one society relative to another; additionally, the different sources of structuration may exhibit more or less “superimposition” from one society to the next – and indeed, in certain cases they could conceivably run at tangents to one another. Consequently, the question of whether the “class principle” is the *predominant* form of structuration within a given society appears to become a *fully* empirical one (1973, pp. 20, 108, 110, 134–135). As we have noted, Bourdieu, while certainly refusing to obviate empirical contingency, explicitly ascribes to *class* formations a probabilistic advantage in the social competitions through which groups are “made and unmade.”

- Lastly, in Giddens' class theory, the only analogue to the "Durkheimian" side of Bourdieu's analysis – that is, to the attempt to relate strategies of symbolic demarcation back to interests grounded in the underlying social structure – lies in a revamped (and thin) account of "class consciousness" (1973, pp. 111–117). Indeed, for Giddens, class consciousness – meaning attitudes and beliefs which have the class structure as their "content" – may or may not emerge from the prior foundation of "class awareness." The latter term indicates attitudes and beliefs which are indigenous to a particular class, yet lack any such content. As such, class awareness is in no sense antagonistic. Consequently, Giddens' account results in overall image of class society which is in no way *inherently* conflict-ridden, unlike that of Bourdieu.

With these differences in view, I believe that we may safely appropriate Giddens' terminology in order to characterize Bourdieu's endeavor.

Of course, it is not only class theorists working in a Weberian vein who have come to find the distinction between the class "in-itself" and "for-itself" problematic; Marxism too has often grappled with the question of the relation between class structures, class formations, and class strategies. In this context, a consideration of Przeworski's influential essay (1985, pp. 47–97; originally published in 1977) on proletarian class formation is illuminating. His argument initially appears to rest on an inversion of more traditional conceptualizations: "classes" are not the precondition of conflicts or struggles; they are, instead, their results. By this he means that economic relations – or indeed, the totality of "objective conditions" (including, in Poulantzian fashion, ideological and political relations of domination as well) – do not "uniquely" determine the possibilities of class formation at a given moment. Consequently, before there can be any conflict *between* classes, there must first be struggle *about* classes – that is, one in which the pertinent collectivities identify themselves and their alter(s) as such, evaluate and recognize their own interests and those of others, organize, mobilize, and so forth (Przeworski, 1985, pp. 70ff.). The implications of this are quite similar to various Bourdieuan premises which we have already examined: classes are continually undergoing processes of organization, disorganization, and reorganization. In this manner, Przeworski attempts to reintroduce history and historical contingency into Marxism (after their expulsion at the hands of Althusser and his followers) without, at the same time, falling back into teleological accounts of class conflict ("historicism"). We thus find remarks such as the following:

classifications of positions must be viewed as immanent to the practices that (may) result in class formation. The very theory of classes must be viewed as internal to particular political projects. Positions within the relations of production, or any other relations for that



matter, are thus no longer viewed as objective in the sense of being prior to class struggles. They are objective only to the extent to which they validate or invalidate the practices of class formation, to the extent to which they make particular projects historically realizable or not. And here the mechanism of determination is not unique: several projects may be feasible at a particular conjuncture (Przeworski, 1985, p. 67).

There is clearly a deep affinity here with the Bourdieuan approach, and in particular, with its view of a “classificatory struggle” as the core process of class formation.

Nevertheless, when we further examine Przeworski’s account, questions arise pertaining to the role of history. Given his general claim that “classes” should be understood as collectivities which are formed out of struggles “about” class, Przeworski, like Bourdieu, is forced to confront the issue of whether the concept of “class” now fully devolves into one among the many first-order discourses through which agents classify each other. In his case, the question is as follows: if we accept the assumption that it is the “totality” of “objective conditions” (economic, political, and ideological) which serve to “validate or invalidate” competing practices of class formation, why does Marxism not simply dissolve into, for example, a generalized conflict sociology? (Przeworski, 1985, pp. 80–81). I will continue to postpone a consideration of Bourdieu’s position with regard to this type of question. For his part, Przeworski attempts to respond by suggesting that Marxism remains the science of “objective conditions,” and it is these which form both the point of departure and the point of arrival for all conflicts (including those which are not class struggles at the “phenomenal level”). This claim rests on an assertion that it is the relations of production which, ultimately, structure the “totality” of objective conditions (Przeworski, 1985, p. 67). Such an assertion, however, leaves him in the position of having to reconcile the efficacy of this determination “in the last instance” with the efficacy of class conflicts (which may potentially have effects on the relations of production themselves). Though not completely clear, Przeworski’s strategy here (1985, pp. 88–90) appears to be one of “partialling out” the different types of causality: struggles between the “carriers” of the capitalist relations of production are ultimately conditioned by long-term “tendencies” of capitalist development (via their influence upon the “totality of objective conditions”), as well as by the shorter-term consequences of past conflicts, insofar as these have been sedimented into “objectivity”; by contrast, the structuration of members of the “surplus labor force” – i.e. all individuals belonging neither to the proletariat nor the bourgeoisie – is declared to be *purely* the result of historical class struggles. As various critics have suggested, this strategy flirts with the teleology that he elsewhere disavows (Aronowitz, 1982, pp. 76–77; Johnston, 1986, pp. 105–107). For reasons that I will detail, Bourdieu does not share the

“problematic” which leads Przeworski to attempt this (arguably) awkward differentiation of causes.

If the preceding reflections suggest that we may reasonably understand Bourdieu’s class analysis via the concept of structuration, there remains the contentious issue of how we should interpret his reliance on occupational categories as units of analysis. Indeed, this reliance has fairly deep roots within Bourdieu’s class analysis: in some of the earliest writings on education, for example, we find parental occupation – broadly categorized (e.g. “senior-management”) – used to indicate social background, at times in admixture with class designations (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, pp. 10–11; Bourdieu, Passeron & de Saint Martin, 1994, pp. 54–55). Moreover, shortly after *Reproduction*, we find Bourdieu beginning to refer to categories of this sort in the language of class “fractions” (e.g. 1973), yet offering no account of the relation between occupation and class. With *Distinction*, we may recall, broad occupational categories come to serve as the units from which the model of social space is constructed statistically, according to the properties exhibited by the incumbents of these categories. At this point in time, we can observe Bourdieu suggesting that data requirements necessitate the central place given to occupational categories (1984, p. 127). Elsewhere he asserts that occupation is essentially an “indicator,” standing in either for “economic and social condition” (1984, p. 106) or for “position in the relations of production” (1984, pp. 101–102).<sup>37</sup>

It might thus be asked whether we should interpret Bourdieu’s model of social space in terms of occupation or class – and whether, if we opt for latter, it is clearly different from the former. Indeed, at first glance it might appear that we could substitute a strictly occupational terminology for Bourdieu’s vocabulary of classes and fractions with little change in meaning. In this context, the proposal recently offered by Grusky and Sørensen (1998) is relevant, insofar as it claims an affinity with Bourdieu on precisely these grounds. According to Grusky and Sørensen, the robust explanatory power once associated with notions of class has dissipated, as a result of various economic and non-economic transformations. They thus recommend an approach which would disaggregate class categories to the occupational level, while simultaneously preserving the explanatory ambitions associated with class analysis. While their approach can claim a certain resemblance to Bourdieu, it nevertheless differs in an important respect. Specifically, it is doubtful that occupation, as conceptualized by Grusky and Sørensen, can be considered “relational,” either in the Saussurian sense appropriated by Bourdieu, or in the more conventionally Marxian sense, according to which, for example, one cannot refer to the “proletariat” without also referring (implicitly or explicitly) to the “bourgeoisie” (e.g. Wright, 1985, pp. 34–35). The implications of this difference become clear if we recall that

Bourdieu often refers to a fraction-specific “collective trajectory.” This concept makes apparent the fact that, for Bourdieu, classes and class fractions are characterized by an identity (over time) which is not solely a function of their occupational composition, but also (and more importantly) of their structural position. Bourdieu thus remains closer to “structurally” inclined variants of class analysis in this respect, Marxism included.

## X. CLASS CONTROL DECENTERED

Before concluding, it is necessary to mention the most important addition Bourdieu has made to his class analytical framework – namely, the introduction of the notion of a “field of power.” This term is used to designate the “upper” segment of the social space; it amounts, in other words, to another name for the structural position of the dominant class. As such, the field of power exhibits an arrangement with which we are already familiar: the different occupational categories are located in relation to one another according to the particular composition of the capitals which their incumbents are typically able to mobilize (see Bourdieu, 1996a, p. 266, which draws on the structural map developed in *Distinction*). Thus, broadly put, the dominant class is differentiated along a continuum separating the holders of predominantly “temporal” power and predominantly “spiritual” power. Analyses of the field of power hence amount to a study of intra-class conflicts. Specifically, because the members of the dominant class are potentially able to mobilize at least two different forms of capital – economic and cultural – it is conceptualized as a site in which the fractions vie to determine the “dominant principle of domination” (Bourdieu, 1996a, p. 265).

The field of power encompasses the occupants of top positions within industry and commerce, upper level executives (public and private), members of the professions, upper level civil servants, professors in higher education, and “artistic producers.” However, each of the institutional arenas within which these agents are situated is itself sub-field, and each exhibits its own internal dynamics. Indeed, Bourdieu attempts to demonstrate that the various sub-fields – organized around highly specific “stakes” – each exhibit a structure more or less homologous with that of the field of power as a whole; that is, each is organized around the opposition between temporally and spiritually founded dominance. In the artistic field, for example, this opposes the avant-garde to commercially oriented artists (Bourdieu, 1995); in the field of business, it opposes public sector managers (or managers of mixed enterprises) to private sector managers (who may also be owners) (Bourdieu, 1996a, pp. 300–308). It is this organization which generates their internal conflicts.

However, I do not wish to take up the difficult question of the relations (only sometimes causal) between the internal and external dynamics of these sub-fields, a question which is summed up well in Bourdieu's preferred phrase, "relative autonomy" (see Bourdieu, 1995, pp. 223ff.). Instead I am interested primarily in Bourdieu's conceptualization of relations between the fractions of the dominant class. Insofar as the members of the class control relatively large volumes of two types of capital, they are presented with two principles of hierarchization, which are structured inversely (Bourdieu, 1996a, p. 270). The essential conflict between the fractions is not oriented to the monopolization of capital, but to the establishment of the primacy of one particular capital over the other. It often entails an attempt to influence state policy – for example, with respect to the regulation of the educational requirements for various occupations (Bourdieu, in Wacquant, 1993, p. 27). Additionally, however, this conflict too exhibits a symbolic dimension: "[the] struggle to impose a dominant principle of domination is at the same time a struggle for legitimation, since to impose the domination of one form of capital is to produce the recognition of its legitimacy, in particular within the opposing camp" (Bourdieu, in Wacquant, 1993, p. 26). The results of such conflict (which presumably tend to take the form of fraction "compromises") amount to what Bourdieu likes to term the "conversion rate" between capitals (1996a, pp. 264–265). Importantly, to the extent that these conflicts concern the relative efficacy of the different capitals, their outcome will have consequences throughout the entirety of the social space.

In the present context, what is of interest is precisely the view of a singular locus of social (class) domination which is characterized by a high level of internal differentiation and which is founded on multiple and largely opposed forms of power. Indeed, this view leads Bourdieu to formulate some interesting empirical propositions concerning the implications of the progressive (but contingent) decentration of class dominance:

we may advance the notion that progress in the differentiation of the forms of power is constituted by so many protective acts against *tyranny*, understood, after the manner of Pascal, as the infringement of one order upon the rights of another, or more precisely, as an intrusion of the forms of power associated with one field in the functioning of another. [T]he dominated can always take advantage of or benefit from conflicts among the powerful, who, quite often, need their cooperation in order to triumph in these conflicts . . . (1996a, p. 398).<sup>38</sup>

Though we could no doubt identify numerous sociological precedents for this strand of Bourdieu's thought, I am particularly struck by the by the similarity to the theory of the "ruling class," especially as it was developed by Aron (1966) in his discussions of liberal democracy, which sought to establish a

typology of “integrated” and “pluralistic” “élites.”<sup>39</sup> Without pushing such a resemblance too far, it might nevertheless be suggested that the notion of a field of power functions so as to conserve the empirical thesis of differentiation, while restoring the notion of a “ruling class” to a properly structural foundation (see Bourdieu, in Wacquant, 1993, pp. 20–21, 35–36).

## XI. IN CONCLUSION: CLASS AND NECESSITY

For reasons that I have tried to develop here, I believe that Bourdieu’s approach to class analysis innovates considerably in a number of different registers (epistemic, theoretical, and empirical). We can summarize these in four points.

- By applying the relational meta-theory in such a manner that the factors constitutive of the model of social space are understood gradationally, Bourdieu develops a unique conceptualization of the class *structure*. This conceptualization entails a multidimensional model in which, as was noted, all possible combinations of the fundamental forms of social power (the different capitals) stand in definite objective relations to one another – or in other words, are subject to interpretation in terms of their relative proximity and distance.
- By insisting that the “secondary properties” are “inseparable” elements of (objective) classes, Bourdieu breaks with predominant views of the *causality* typically ascribed to the class structure. Moreover, in claiming that the system of interacting factors which are implicated in the explanation of a particular practice may alter their configuration according to the field in which that practice is situated, he is – arguably – able to conserve the premise that class comprises a universal explanatory principle.
- The resulting view of sociological verification implies the postulation of an *isomorphism* between the class *structure* and the *structure* of symbolically encoded practices. It is as a consequence of this premise that the confirmation of causal hypotheses is demonstrated primarily through a juxtaposition of correspondence diagrams – a method whose evaluation is, of course, restricted to visual inspection.
- The principle that practices nonetheless enjoy a *conditional autonomy* is “built into” Bourdieu’s approach insofar as it views class (and fraction) conflicts in terms of agents’ attempts to partition a social space whose constitutive parameters are distributed in continuous fashion. Bourdieu is largely interested in those social divisions which, like lifestyle, are generated symbolically, and which can serve to legitimate the underlying distributions. He also analyzes, however, the processes through which such divisions may be more or less durably inscribed into the “objectivity” of institutions.

The result of these four propositions is a class analytical theory and research program that departs considerably from received traditions. As I have suggested, the theory and analysis can be provisionally understood via the concept of structuration, as long as we remain fully clear about those characteristics which set it apart from more familiar uses of the term.

There remains only the vexing issue of the place accorded to the so-called secondary properties, that is, their role as moderators. In attempting to make sense of this, we should not underestimate the vehemence with which Bourdieu argues against conflating “objective” class with the symbolically unified (and potentially mobilized) collectivity. Appropriate to a sociology which takes “symbolic violence” as its prized object, there is a strong constructivist element which is native to Bourdieu’s class analysis, one which implies that the “social discourse of class” is merely one among the myriad categorical forms through which agents undertake “the meaningful construction of the social world.” This implies that class formations can only be the result of a competition between symbolic formulae. At the same time, however, we have already noted that Bourdieu ascribes a greater probability to the emergence of class formations, other factors being equal: “groups mobilized on the basis of a secondary criterion (such as sex or age) are likely to be bound together less permanently and less deeply than those mobilized on the basis of the fundamental determinants of their condition” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 107; see 1998a, p. 11 for a recent statement).

McCall (1992) has taken up this question with respect to the place of gender in Bourdieu’s sociology. She discerns two largely distinct tendencies: on the one hand, she finds in Bourdieu a propensity to confer upon gender a “mediating” role, whereby it determines the distribution of the capitals – which are essentially gender-neutral – *within* each class; on the other hand, and running contrary to the first tendency in her view, is Bourdieu’s more successful ability to develop highly nuanced descriptive accounts of the dispositions constitutive of the gendered habitus (see McCall, 1992, pp. 839–844). I believe that this diagnosis is inaccurate because it is not fully clear about the notion of structural causality that Bourdieu operates with (and the associated primacy claim). On the interpretation that was proposed above, in other words, the efficacy of capital is never exercised in independence from the moderating action of gender (and other secondary properties); capital can thus have no gender-neutral *effects*. Consequently, the habitus, as the product of this efficacy, is necessarily gendered – but only within the context of its associated economic determination. Indeed, it seems to me that in order to sustain her diagnosis, and specifically, her assessment of the second tendency she isolates, McCall must systematically play down Bourdieu’s insistence on class (and

fraction) variations in gender dispositions (see Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 185ff., esp. 190–193, 206–207). This suggests that if we wish to get clear about the “secondary” status accorded to these factors – a status accorded them in the *causal* order – then we must look elsewhere.

Ultimately, it seems to me that Bourdieu’s approach is conditioned by a presupposition that may seem both banal and obvious, yet which, if it remains unthematized, may introduce opacity into any attempt to engage his sociology. Let us recall the distinction between class condition and class position. On the interpretation offered above, Bourdieu was only able to break out of the inchoate position he developed in the 1966 article by re-casting this distinction in strictly epistemic terms. Thus, the notion of a class position was taken to refer to a particular occupational location within the relationally construed class structure. The notion of a class condition, in turn, was taken to refer to this *same* location, but seen from a different perspective. Specifically, it came to designate a viewpoint in which what counted were not the relations that differentiated the location from others, but the experiential “conditions of existence” entailed by occupancy of it, and the consequent “limitations” and “facilities” which they imposed, *qua milieu*, upon the formation of the habitus. The concept of a class condition, in other words, came to designate the particular experience of *necessity* associated with a given location, and the detachment from or submersion in the practical demands of life which resulted from it. The centrality of the class condition is reiterated throughout *Distinction*, but with relatively little explication.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, I believe we must acknowledge that the causal primacy accorded to volume and composition of capital in Bourdieu’s theory – understood specifically as the structural coordinates of an occupational location – derives precisely from the assumption that it is primarily via the occupational system that the *asymmetrical “distribution of necessity”* occurs (see Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 117). That this supposition should be operative in Bourdieu’s sociology may well appear to be a trivial observation. Yet, once recognized explicitly, it has interpretive implications. Above all, I believe we are compelled to reject categorically the view that class, in Bourdieu, amounts to no more than “a *metaphor* for the total set of social determinants” (Brubaker, 1985, p. 769; my italics).

However, even if this amounts to a plausible account of the rationale supporting the causal primacy assertion in *Distinction*, it might be asked where Bourdieu’s more recent writings on gender stand with regard this assertion. By way of conclusion, I would like to briefly try and sketch the articulation between the two. Bourdieu approaches the question of gender via an elaboration of his analyses of the Kabyles (1977, 1990b), under the supposition that, at the time of his observations, Kabylia amounted to a kind of “anthropological sanctuary”

in which the gendered “modes of thought” that underlie the cultural traditions of the entire Mediterranean region were preserved more or less intact (Bourdieu, 1996b, p. 192). He proceeds by reconstructing the classificatory cosmology which divides the universe according to a series of gendered oppositions. He describes the reproduction of the relation of gender domination in terms of the “inculcation” of this cosmology and the consequent formation of a gendered habitus, and its accord with a system of institutions (such as household and market). From our perspective, what is important is the fact that masculine domination is, at its basis, symbolic in nature – that is, it is a relation between agents characterized by positively or negatively valued symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1990c). Indeed, Bourdieu claims that in the context of Kabylia, the “economy of symbolic goods” obtrudes upon the “economy of material production” and upon the “economy of biological reproduction” (Bourdieu, 1990c, p. 27).

In order to relate the analysis to differentiated societies, Bourdieu again invokes the “relative autonomy” of the symbolic economy, but in a sense far more radical than that of *Distinction*: as a result of this autonomy, “masculine domination can perpetuate itself despite transformations in the mode of production” (1996b, p. 200). He further asserts that the obtrusion of the dynamics of symbolic capital upon the material economy has been largely conserved, on the grounds that “the traditional structure of the division of labor between the sexes was relatively unaffected by the industrial revolution” (1990c, p. 27). This is the case despite the separation of the economic and domestic spheres in the modern West. Thus, the “material conditions of existence” have little role in these analyses. Indeed, what is of interest is the fact that the distribution of symbolic capital is not to be explained – or at least not fully explained – by reference to the distributions of economic and cultural capital, and its function is not restricted to the “transformation” and legitimation of these latter distributions. In other words, symbolic capital – understood precisely as a mechanism of classification and legitimation – exhibits an efficacy that extends far beyond the boundary conflicts through which classes and class fractions partition social space. As a consequence, Bourdieu is led to (briefly) recast the relation between gender domination and the class structure.

This reformulation does not dispense with the notion of class-based status group that stood at the heart of *Distinction*. Indeed, Bourdieu further asserts that, as a result of the relation of gender domination, it is women who are typically compelled to manufacture the symbolic expressions of the group – that is, to produce its status symbols: “it is by a simple extension of women’s traditional role that duties . . . in the production and consumption of symbolic goods and services – or more precisely, of *signs of distinction* – are, by and



large, bestowed upon them” (Bourdieu, 1990c, pp. 28–29). Women, in other words, are more or less socially destined to carry out the *labor of conversion* through which economic and cultural capital are “transformed” into symbolic capital (in the sense of consumption groups). Importantly, this particular effect of “symbolic violence” would appear to hold, despite certain variations, *across all locations in social space*; it would appear to comprise, in other words, a constant.<sup>41</sup>

## NOTES

1. Also important in this respect are Bourdieu (1990a, pp. 122–139; 1998a, pp. 1–13). Brubaker’s essay was published in the same issue of *Theory and Society* as Bourdieu’s article “The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups” (1985).

2. Clarification of the class structure/class formation relation is a longstanding concern of sociology. Nevertheless, the formulation developed by Aron (1965) can be mentioned here, since, given the centrality that Aron ascribes to the problem with respect to the legitimacy of class analysis as such, it may well have influenced Bourdieu’s own understanding of the problem (see Bourdieu, 1985, pp. 739ff).

3. The nature of this “logic of opposition” is actually somewhat more complicated, since it can link not only different classes within the same “social order,” but also the same class across different historical times. Thus, in what will become one of his favorite examples, Bourdieu speaks of the petty bourgeoisie as “the class of transition which defines itself fundamentally by that which it is no longer and by that which it is not yet” (1966, p. 207). For a more recent discussion of the sense and importance of the relational approach (now bound up with the concept of field), see Bourdieu (in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 96–97, 228–232).

4. The question thus arises of where the distinction between class situation and class position stands vis-à-vis Marxism. Bourdieu offers merely a passing answer, but it is of interest: “[t]here is no doubt that properties of position and properties of situation can only be dissociated by an operation of thought . . . [if] only because the class situation can also be defined in terms of position in the system of relations of production” (1966, p. 202). This remark appears to be a request, addressed to Marxism, for forbearance: situational properties – the condition of possibility of positional properties – may themselves be explicable in “relational” terms (that is, in terms of the relations between different positions within a structure) . . . but only “in the last instance.” The implication seems to be that while classes may ultimately be determined by the relations of production, in a Marxian sense, simple structural facts such as wage labor or ownership of the productive enterprise are inadequate – if utilized in an immediate manner – to explain the host of phenomena which Bourdieu associates with social class. This being the case, the distinction between situation and position will prove worthwhile insofar and only insofar as it can demonstrate “heuristic fruitfulness” (Bourdieu, 1966, p. 202).

5. Nevertheless, I believe that the interpretation developed by Swartz (1997, pp. 150–153), which has been very helpful in other respects, is mistaken on this point. Because the concept of a “class situation” comes directly from Weber, Swartz identifies situational properties with class as such (which he then assimilates to the notion of “life chances”), and correlatively identifies positional properties with status. This is

precisely the type of elision that is invited by Bourdieu's inability to develop both the institutional and meta-theoretical notions of "structure." However, it is clear that Bourdieu does not wish to restrict the application of the meta-theoretical sense to symbolic systems alone. Indeed, the notion of a social structure (in the sense that Bourdieu speaks of it) has no real function within the context of Swartz's interpretation. (Moreover, we can find numerous statements to the effect that status distinctions are to be understood as symbolic expressions of both differences of situation and differences of position [e.g. Bourdieu, 1966, pp. 212, 222].)

6. The social cultivation of new needs looms large in *Distinction* (for example, Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 153–154; for an earlier statement, see Bourdieu & Passeron 1990, p. 38). See also Marx's famous remark on tobacco (1981, p. 479).

7. They write:

primary ... [pedagogical work] prepares [the child] that much better for secondary ... [pedagogical work] based on explicit pedagogy when exerted within a group or class whose material conditions of existence allow them [sic] to stand more completely aside from practice, in other words to "neutralize" in imagination or reflection the vital urgencies which thrust a pragmatic disposition on the dominated classes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 49).

8. The premise is succinctly stated in the note accompanying the diagram: "within this system of factors constantly restructured by its own action, the relative weight of the determinations due to initial class membership constantly declines to the advantage of the academic determinations which retranslate them" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 259).

9. See Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, p. 199):

[i]t is precisely its relative autonomy that enables the traditional educational system to make a specific contribution towards reproducing the structure of class relations, since it need only obey its own rules in order to obey, additionally, the external imperatives defining its function of legitimating the established order, that is, to fulfill simultaneously its social function of reproducing the class relations, by ensuring the hereditary transmission of cultural capital, and its ideological function of concealing that social function by accrediting the illusion of its absolute autonomy.

On the ambiguously treated opposition between "traditional" and "rationalized" secondary pedagogy, see Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, pp. 52–54).

10. Bottomore's foreword to the English translation of *Reproduction* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, pp. xvi–xvii) notes that the text must presuppose a more general theory of classes, a point also made by various critics (e.g. Connell, 1983, p. 147).

11. Bourdieu presents his map of the class structure in a diagram which is difficult to take in (1984, pp. 128–129), both because it is printed with a second diagram superimposed (displaying the structure of lifestyle attributes), and because it is a composite representation of the results of correspondence analyses carried out on multiple data sets (see the discussion on 1984, p. 127). The axes are calculated from numerous measures of income, consumption power, educational attainment, and social origin, which are all understood as indicators (1984, pp. 127–130, 538–543; consumption power is considered to be an indirect measure of economic capital: see p. 116). Elsewhere Bourdieu refers to the dangers entailed in interpreting "latent" factors (1988, pp. 71–72).

12. Indeed, the question of whether a particular form of capital is privileged now becomes an empirical one, since the analysis conceptualizes intra-class relations in terms of struggles over the “dominant principle of hierarchization” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 120) – that is, the relative power attaching to the different capitals. This will be discussed below.

13. Here we might recall Dahrendorf’s (1959, p. 218) charge that Parsons displays “almost totalitarian convictions” in his stratification theory.

14. This is where Bourdieu’s discussion of “objective class” is most liable to result in confusion. In the text of *Distinction*, the construction of the spatial representation of the class structure occurs after the discussion of the role of the secondary properties. (I have obviously found it convenient to invert this order of presentation.) Thus, given the extensive thematization to which they are subject, these properties ought to be featured prominently in the representation of the structure, along with those pertaining to capital. However, they are nearly invisible there: the construction includes only some indicators of residence and fertility (1984, pp. 128–129). The most glaring absence is gender, since it is undoubtedly the most important of the secondary properties in the actual analyses. Thus, whereas the discussion had stressed the importance of the feminization of certain occupations, the diagrammatic presentation of objective classes does not contain any indication of where in social space this may be occurring. No explanation is given for this rather abrupt disappearance. In certain cases it may be the result of data limitations: at least some of the survey data Bourdieu uses in order to develop the representation of social space (especially that on economic resources), collected by governmental agencies, apparently included only information on men (see 1984, p. 519, item II, for example; for an inventory of the data sets that went into the construction of the objective classes, see p. 127). In other cases, however, it appears that Bourdieu only utilizes data on men, despite the availability of a more fully representative sample (for example, 1984, p. 520, item IV). All of this may be a manifestation the perennially unresolved question of the most appropriate approach to class analysis – i.e. via the individual or the family.

15. The relevant sections of the earlier educational studies, in other words, while making copious reference to the “total system of factors” and the like, never fully delineate the “members” of this system, and instead remain almost completely focused on cultural capital. As we have seen, these studies leave the broader conception of class with which they work implicit; associated with this is the fact that the place of the demographic factors (so-called secondary properties in *Distinction*) with respect to class is ambiguous.

16. I thus believe that Bourdieu would also concur with MacIver’s comment that “[a]n important distinction between a mechanical unity and . . . a social unity is that we can often change one factor in the former while keeping all the others wholly or practically unchanged” (1964, p. 94, note 30).

The implication of Bourdieu’s approach is that the question of the most appropriate conceptualization of causal processes must be seen as an *epistemic* one. Thus, just as it is incumbent on Bourdieu to provide supporting epistemic reasons for the adequacy or superiority of his approach, it would be equally incumbent on those who prefer to try and “partial out” the causal influence of individual factors to explain why such an approach is not “fallacious” (in MacIver’s sense). At the very least, inattention to these arguments in Bourdieu’s writing casts a dubious light on many of the attempts to test the validity or reproducibility of his results, insofar as they blithely rely on statistical techniques such as regression (for example, Robinson & Garnier, 1985).

17. Another potential source of confusion arises from the fact that on the page immediately preceding this remark, we find Bourdieu stating that “[e]conomic and social condition, as identified by occupation, gives a specific form to all the properties of sex and age . . .” (1984, p. 106). Moreover, at a later point he even asserts that the influence of the secondary properties is “governed” by that of occupation (1984, p. 112). This confusion (social condition versus capital) can be forestalled, however, if we recall that the *same* sociological “object” (i.e. economic location) can be considered either in terms of the position which it occupies within the class structure, in which case it is understood according to the volume and composition of capital associated with it, or in terms of the “necessities and freedoms” which it imposes upon agents, in which case it is understood according to the “conditions of existence” it entails. In either case, the “object” being described is an economic location, which is in turn denoted by means of an occupational category.

18. While Bourdieu himself never directly invokes the concept of moderators, we can note that the examples he provides in order to illustrate the significance of the secondary properties (1984, pp. 103–105) are precisely of this sort. The “moderating” function of these properties is perhaps clearest in the case of residency, which is sometimes referred to in Bourdieu’s earlier work in terms of the way in which it can condition the acquisition and utilization of cultural capital. Thus, for example, in the diagram in *Reproduction*, Bourdieu and Passeron elaborate the significance of residency to lie in “distance from the centre(s) of cultural values” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 259).

19. Both in its epistemic assertion that factors are related interactively and its meta-theoretical assertion that the factors pertaining to capital enjoy a primacy vis-à-vis the secondary properties, Bourdieu’s approach differs sharply from that of Wright. In the first place, Wright’s standpoint is more conventional, if measured against the (usually implicit) assumptions of most explanatory sociology, insofar as it presupposes that causal factors operate independently of one another, unless and until the converse can be demonstrated empirically: as against the type of fusion of causal actions implied by Bourdieu’s approach, Wright’s epistemic preference is for a “disaggregation” of effects attributable to distinct causal “mechanisms” (see Wright, in Wright et al., 1998, p. 291). In the second place, it would appear to be the case that, for Wright, any attempt to ground a causal primacy claim meta-theoretically amounts to a residual instance of Hegelian-Marxist *a priori*ism (see Wright, Levine & Sober, 1992, pp. 129–175, esp. 173–175).

20. The “specificity” of the capital which is functional in a particular field in no way precludes the moderating effect of multiple secondary properties – although they too will have a “specificity” according to “logic” of the field. The question of whether, at least in certain contexts, one or more of the “secondary properties” might actually exhibit a primary efficacy (one whose effects are, in turn, moderated by capital) is not posed.

21. In a footnote, Bourdieu (1984, p. 571, note 9) disassociates himself from the methodological project of partialling covariances, on the grounds that it results in “partial explanations.”

22. If only to forestall confusion, the following remark from Taylor must be mentioned:

[m]aps or representations, by their very nature, abstract from lived time and space. To make something like this the ultimate causal factor is to make the actual practice in time and space merely derivative, a mere application of a disengaged scheme. It is the ultimate Platonism (Taylor, 1993, p. 56).

The “schemes” of which Taylor speaks are indeed seen by Bourdieu as corporeal and pre-articulate, rather than free-floating entities or objects in the “realm” of culture (leaving aside the special case of codified rules, such as law (Taylor, 1993, p. 59)). However, there is nothing intrinsically “Platonic” to the claim that these corporeal schemes are *themselves* the product of a class structure – even if this structure is best represented (for social scientific purposes) topographically (see Bourdieu, 1984, p. 169).

23. This diagram is not meant to represent biographical processes, though biographical relations obviously obtain between class, habitus, and practice. In the case of cultural production, Bourdieu recasts the specification effect exerted by the field as an “imposition of form,” which he also describes with the psychoanalytical language of “censorship” (see Bourdieu, 1991a, pp. 70ff.).

24. This empirical thesis, which is the basis of Lash’s (1990, pp. 237–265) rather extravagant attempt to provide a “postmodern” interpretation of Bourdieu, is not always accounted for by critics (for example, Honneth, 1995). However, it is only recognition of this claim (which, to be sure, is not argued comparatively) that allows us to begin to make sense of the fact that the sociological critique of normative-political judgments occupies an ancillary position in *Distinction*, reading like an appendix.

In my view, the strongest of the criticisms offered by Lamont in her often-cited study (1992) derive precisely from the empirical evidence she marshals in order to demonstrate the (continued) general salience of the normative dimensions of culture to the formation of group identity and lifestyle, thereby casting some doubt at least on extreme forms of the “supersession” argument. Of course, this should not be taken to disprove the tenets of the broader theory of practice, which is just as comfortable unmasking one form of disinterested action as it is another (see, in this regard, Bourdieu (1998a, pp. 75–91)).

25. The implications of Bourdieu’s approach to hermeneutic explication become most apparent not in the analysis of lifestyles, however, but in the Heidegger study (Bourdieu, 1991a). Bourdieu’s method entails reconstructing “internally” the reasons which animate particular philosophical arguments and confer their specifically philosophical “force” on them. Nevertheless, rather than evaluating these arguments – rather than taking a position on their validity or invalidity – the sociology of knowledge re-interprets them in order to reveal their suffusion by any number of social “phantasms,” and to thus demonstrate the manner in which social conflicts pervade philosophical conflicts, conferring systematicity upon the “stances” and “position-takings” with which individuals and schools oppose one another (see Bourdieu, 1991a, pp. 56ff.; see also the remarks on method in 1993b). The paradigmatic status of the Heidegger study in this regard results from its fearless exhibition of the near-vertigo that derives from the act of taking as sociological object the processes influencing the production of a discourse which (among other things) denies the legitimacy of the concept of validity upon which the whole sociological endeavor rests.

26. Brubaker identifies four “levels of analysis” in *Distinction*: status practices, habitus, conditions of existence, and capital (1985, pp. 764–765). If the present argument is not incorrect, Brubaker’s claim can be said to lead to the mistaken assumption that the last two of these “levels” stand in a causal relation (I have suggested instead that they amount to an epistemic distinction between two ways of viewing an occupational location). At risk of trafficking in minutiae, I would point out that the methodological discussion in the chapter on objective class refers to the relation between only three distinct “spaces”: lifestyle, habitus, and class (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 126).

27. The effect of a change in position is attenuated, however, by the fact that the early socialization carries a disproportionate weight in the constitution of the habitus. Bourdieu speaks, in this context, of “ordinary perception’s” ability to identify “parvenus” and “déclassés” (1984, pp. 109–110). This must be distinguished from the situation in which the structure of positions *itself* varies over time (which Bourdieu discusses in terms of “hysteresis”). Here occupancy of a position which becomes devalued, for example, leads to a discordance precisely because the habitus remains adjusted to a situation in which it carried a greater quantity of capital (for Bourdieu’s account of the distinction between absolute and relative mobility, see 1984, pp. 127, 130; 1996, p. 277).

It is surprising that the treatment of mobility in *Distinction* has occasioned so little interest in the secondary literature, given the criticisms leveled at *Reproduction* in this regard. This is no doubt due to Bourdieu’s willingness to ascribe a decisively reproductive character to the aggregate results of individuals’ attempts to alter their positions; however, this should be balanced against other aspects of Bourdieu’s study, and in particular, as Swartz points out (1997, pp. 182–183), against his own data on the social origins of the members of the dominant class. Be this as it may, Bourdieu’s approach innovates considerably on the theoretical side, especially by opening the way to an analysis of “lateral” movements (or the lateral dimension of movements) through the class structure (which Bourdieu describes in terms of “conversion” of capitals).

At risk of an extended digression, we should also note here – in opposition to those who find ultra-deterministic tendencies in the concept of habitus – that Bourdieu’s utilization of probabilistic statements places openly declared (though not elaborated) limitations on such tendencies:

[t]o say that the members of a class initially possessing a certain economic and cultural capital are destined, with a given probability, to an educational and social trajectory leading to a given position means in fact that a fraction of the class (*which cannot be determined a priori within the limits of this explanatory system*) will deviate from the trajectory most common for the class as a whole and follow the (higher or lower) trajectory which was most probable for members of another class (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 111; my emphasis).

(The term “fraction” obviously should not be taken in a structural sense here; “segment” or even “portion” could be substituted.) The footnote to this remark (1984, p. 571, note 12) expressly leaves open the question of the degree to which “deviant” trajectories themselves are open to causal explanation. The consequences of such trajectories are discussed in the recent work on education; they stand at the heart of what Bourdieu now calls the “statistical mode of reproduction” effected through the school (Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 183–187, 287–289; 1998, pp. 19–30), which in turn forms the basis of his account of the legitimation function of education.

28. Elster criticizes Bourdieu precisely on the grounds that he allows the social space to function both as a causal factor and as a field of “play” (or battle). As Elster puts it, “[s]ymbolic action in Bourdieu’s view is explained twice over: first as the result of an insidious adaptation to necessity, and then as quasi-strategic and goal-directed behavior” (1981, p. 12). The seriousness one attributes to this objection will depend, simply enough, on how seriously one is willing to take the concept of habitus – and especially its “generative” character – the self-described purpose of which, from early on, has been to avoid the alternatives of “mechanism” and “finalism” (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 72ff.). Elster (1981, p. 12), for his part, recommends a return to the position developed by Bourdieu in 1966, according to which the working class lifestyle may be accounted for in terms of an

adaptation to necessity (i.e. mechanistically), while that of the “middle classes” may be accounted for in terms of the strategic search for distinction (i.e. finalistically). This would, obviously, viscerate the place of a relationally construed class structure in the explanatory scheme.

29. I believe that it is only because Honneth overlooks this relation between a collective doxa and class-specific construals of it (Honneth, 1985, p. 198 refers to a “functional” gap in the argument precisely in this respect), that he can assert a tension between implied “adaptive” tendencies and the commitment to particular collective identities. Here as elsewhere, Bourdieu insists that his use of the notion of “interest” can reconcile strategic denotations with existential ones (see 1984, p. 478; 1991b, pp. 220–228; for a recent attempt to pursue this reconciliation in its meta-theoretical details, see 1998a, pp. 75–91).

30. See Bourdieu (1984, pp. 475–476). As an example of a change in range of application, we might identify the attempt to maintain class or fraction unity in the face of transformations in the ethnic or gender composition of an occupation. As an example of a modification of content, we could pick up the case of the “labor aristocracy,” and point to affirmations of the “mental” vs. “manual” divide in place of, say, authority differences as a means of maintaining unity. Finally, as an example of attempts to modify the structure of doxic schemata, we can note all instances – particularly potent in the political field, even if derivative from a semiotic viewpoint – of invocations of a “third way,” as well as certain appeals to the “middle” (of the opinion spectrum, income spectrum, etc.).

31. For those who find in Bourdieu’s notion of “relative autonomy” nothing more than a meta-theoretically initiated belief in the efficacy of social reproduction, it ought to be pointed out that in the Heidegger study (1991a, 1993b) and in the recent work on literature (1995), we have examples of studies in which individual agents – while certainly not lucid and clear-headed about their own or others’ actions – are able, by means of innovative symbolic productions, to construct new social positions, *and thus to re-define the structure of the field itself*. By no means do these studies dispense with causal analysis, though the accent is undoubtedly shifted away from structural determinations and onto the strategies of the habitus. Thus, *pace* Kögler and others (and for better or for worse), Bourdieu is quite able to dispose of the specter of “endless reproduction” without having to invoke “learning processes,” “reflexivity,” or an “intentional response” (see Kögler, 1997, esp. p. 152).

32. Criticisms of Bourdieu, like that of Hall (1992), which object to the “structuralist holism” that is evident in the postulate of a single, systematic (and hierarchical) interrelation between all lifestyle practices in *Distinction*, are plausible insofar as – but only insofar as – they proceed on strictly empirical grounds. Although *Distinction* does not develop its own historical hypotheses (as I have already suggested), it is clear from other work that Bourdieu considers the “holistic integration” of fields to be a *historical variable*, according to the motif of a “unification of the market” (see, above all, Bourdieu, 1991b, pp. 43–65, and esp. 50ff., which openly targets Saussure). Much of Bourdieu’s recent work on cultural production (1995, pp. 117–121 and *passim*.) develops this dimension of his approach, early “promissory notes” for which, however, can be identified (and sometimes where least expected: for example, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, p. 14)).

This is a good place to mention Bourdieu’s conceptualization of cultural diffusion, which has not received much discussion. Given the broader theory, Bourdieu seems to

feel that processes of diffusion must inevitably take the form of a “trickle-down effect” (1984, pp. 247–252, esp. note 28; see also 1998a, p. 4), according to which the distinctive practices undertaken by those located in a particular position within the class structure serve as the ideal towards which those below strive, only to be abandoned by the former in favor of new practices precisely to the extent that the latter are successful.

This model was taken up early on from Barber and Lobel’s work on fashion (see Bourdieu, 1966, p. 216), and Bourdieu tends to generalize it beyond the realm of lifestyle (see 1984, p. 164). At risk of intuitionism, however, we might wonder if, for example, the “trickle-down” concept is fully sufficient to characterize the empirical processes through which consumer culture circulates, at least in the contemporary U.S. context. And in response, we could note the model proposed by Bryson (1996), who – in an analysis that could, at least, easily be interpreted according to the tenets of the Bourdieuan theory of practice – offers up, with the appearance of intellectual necessity unfolding, the notion of “multi-cultural capital.” Peterson and Kern’s (1996) concept of cultural “omnivores” taps a similar idea. Bourdieu has recently recognized the existence of “trickle-up” phenomena, albeit parenthetically (1998b, pp. 76–77).

33. Alexander, in contrast, ever fixated upon the *idée rouge*, finds in Bourdieu’s analyses of different social fields the ubiquitous, pathological repetition of a structure that is “most decidedly capitalist in form” (Alexander, 1995, p. 160).

34. However, contrary to the assertions of Lash (1993, pp. 200–201), which imply that a “relational” account of social structure must be modeled in categorical terms, Bourdieu feels that utilization of gradational factors does not imperil the priority of “function” over “substance” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 228–230). This is because the concept of “space” that he appropriates has at its basis the notion of “mutual exteriority” (Bourdieu, 1998a, p. 31); the factors are thus constituted from points understood to represent “infinitesimal” differences.

35. However much this early text by Giddens may be concerned with purely conceptual puzzles, it undoubtedly does not display the preoccupation with “social ontology” that, for Wacquant at least, decisively differentiates Giddens and Bourdieu (see Wacquant, in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 3, note 3). For a comparative analysis that does revolve around such issues, see Sewell (1992), whose discussion of the meaning of “structure” in Bourdieu, however, touches only on the notion of habitus. Wright (in Wright et al., 1998, pp. 291–292) has noted the similarity between this work by Giddens and *Distinction*; he does not, however, undertake a systematic comparison.

36. There is one footnote in which Bourdieu seems to come close to a similar assumption of contingent “superimposition,” by speaking of the “reinforcement” that the organization of social space may receive from factors such as ethnicity or religion (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 743, note 4). I consider these statements to run contrary to the argument developed in *Distinction*. However, see the discussion of gender in the conclusion for some remarks which may be pertinent.

37. It is this statement which explains the (otherwise scandalous!) fact that Bourdieu occasionally (e.g. 1984, p. 396) uses phrases like “relations of production” and “occupational hierarchy” interchangeably. See also Bourdieu (1987, p. 4).

38. Nevertheless, when Pakulski and Waters declare that “Bourdieu . . . purges . . . the privileged position of the general economic power grid from what is still nominally a class theory” (1996, p. 44), they are attempting to discern a theoretical elegy where there is in fact only an empirical problematic:



[t]he relations of the other fields to the field of economic production [in the narrow sense] are both relations of structural homology and relations of causal dependence, the form of causal determination being defined by structural relations and the force of domination being greater when the relations in which it is exercised are closer to the relations of economic production (Bourdieu, 1991a, p. 246; my addition).

Need it be added that in Bourdieu's judgement, any such "protection against tyranny" remains in principle tenuous, and at the present moment, particularly subject to regression? (Bourdieu, 1998b).

39. According to Aron,

[f]our antitheses – temporal power and spiritual power, civil power and military power, political power and administrative power, political power and economic power – illustrate the modern differentiation of functions of control, the increase in the number of social groups actually capable of exercising the function of control or of substantially influencing those who exercise it (Aron, 1966, p. 205).

Aron attempted to argue that it was the composition of the ruling groups, rather than that of economic classes, which determined the contours of society as a whole. In the context of Bourdieu's scheme, any such distinction is dissolved.

40. The meaning and centrality of the class condition seem worth stressing here in light of the fact that "relationalism" or "relationality" – construed epistemologically or ontologically – has become something of a cutting-edge "meta-position" in sociology of late (for example, Emirbayer, 1997; Somers, 1995, 1997; Vandenberghe, 1999). This being the case, the quiet but crucial place which Bourdieu reserves for *intrinsic* properties within his class analysis ought to be considered by those developing one or another version of this "meta-position." Indeed, we can point to the following statement (which appears in an essay sub-section titled "The Real is Relational," no less): "[t]he habitus is this generative and unifying principle which retranslates the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position into a unitary lifestyle . . ." (Bourdieu, 1998a, p. 8).

41. This is not to say, of course, that it comprises a universal. Bourdieu offers up a reflection on the social and symbolic conditions which he feels would have to be met in order for a "gender revolution" to occur (1996b, pp. 200–201). It should be noted, if only in passing, that the more radical notion of the autonomy of the symbolic which is evident here accords with more recent statements that seem to prioritize symbolic capital vis-à-vis the other species of capital (e.g. Bourdieu, 1993a, p. 274). Wacquant affirms this prioritization explicitly in describing the *Pascalian Meditations*: "Bourdieu refutes once and for all the utilitarian misreadings of his work by planting at the core of being the thirst for recognition . . ." (Wacquant, 1999, p. 278).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A shorter version of this paper was presented at the 2000 meeting of the American Sociological Association. I would like to express my gratitude to David Swartz for his comments on an early draft of this paper, and to Stanley

Aronowitz, Rolf Meyersohn, and Julie Ford for their recommendations concerning later drafts.

## REFERENCES

- Alexander, J. (1995). *Fin de Siècle Social Theory: Relativism, Reduction, and the Problem of Reason*. London and New York: Verso.
- Althusser, L., & Balibar, E. (1975[1968]). *Reading Capital*, B. Brewster (Trans.). London: New Left Books.
- Aron, R. (1965). La classe comme représentation et comme volonté. *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, 38(2), 11–29.
- Aron, R. (1966[1960]). Social Class, Political Class, Ruling Class. In: R. Bendix & S. M. Lipset (Eds), *Class, Status, and Power: Social Stratification in Comparative Perspective* (pp. 201–210). New York: The Free Press.
- Aronowitz, S. (1982). *The Crisis in Historical Materialism: Class, Politics and Culture in Marxist Theory*. New York: Praeger.
- Blau, P. M., & Duncan, O. D. (1967). *The American Occupational Structure*. New York: Wiley.
- Boltanski, L. (1987[1982]). *The Making of a Class: Cadres in French Society*, A. Goldhammer (Trans.). Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1966). Condition de classe et position de classe. *Archives européennes de sociologie*, 7(2), 201–223.
- Bourdieu, P. (1968). Structuralism and the Theory of Sociological Knowledge. *Social Research*, 35(4), 681–706.
- Bourdieu, P. (1973[1971]). Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction. In: R. Brown (Ed.), *Knowledge, Education, and Cultural Change: Papers in the Sociology of Education* (pp. 71–112). London: Tavistock Publications.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977[1972]). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, R. Nice (Trans.) Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984[1979]). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, R. Nice (Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1985). The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups. *Theory and Society*, 14(6), 723–744.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of Capital. In: J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241–258). New York: Greenwood Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1987a). What Makes a Social Class? On the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 32, 1–17.
- Bourdieu, P. (1987b). The Force of Law: Toward a Sociology of the Juridical Field. *The Hastings Law Journal*, 38, 814–853.
- Bourdieu, P. (1988[1984]). *Homo Academicus*, P. Collier (Trans.) Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990a). *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, M. Adamson (Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990b[1980]). *The Logic of Practice*, R. Nice (Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990c). La domination masculine. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 84, 2–31.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991a[1988]). *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*, P. Collier (Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

- Bourdieu, P. (1991b). *Language and Symbolic Power*, G. Raymond & M. Adamson (Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993a). Concluding Remarks: For a Sociogenetic Understanding of Intellectual Works. In: C. Calhoun, E. LiPuma & M. Postone (Eds), *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*. (pp. 263–275). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993b[1988]). Back to History: An Interview. In: R. Wolin (Ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (pp. 264–271). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1995[1992]). *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, S. Emanuel (Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1996a[1989]). *The State Nobility: Elite Schools and the Field of Power*, L. C. Clough (Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1996b). Masculine Domination Revisited. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 41, 189–203.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998a[1994]). *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998b). *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market*, R. Nice (Trans.). New York: The New Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Boltanski, L. (1981[1975]). The Educational System and the Economy: Titles and Jobs, R. Nice (Trans.). In: C. C. Lemert (Ed.), *French Sociology: Rupture and Renewal Since 1968* (pp. 141–151). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bourdieu, P., Chamboredon, J.-C., & Passeron, J.-C. (1991[1968]). *The Craft of Sociology: Epistemological Preliminaries*, R. Nice (Trans.). Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1990[1970]). *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, R. Nice (Trans.). London: Sage Publications.
- Bourdieu, P., Passeron, J.-C., & de Saint Martin, M. (1994[1965]). *Academic Discourse: Linguistic Misunderstanding and Professorial Power*, R. Teese (Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Brubaker, R. (1985). Rethinking Classical Theory: The Sociological Vision of Pierre Bourdieu. *Theory and Society*, 14(6), 745–775.
- Bryson, B. (1996). ‘Anything But Heavy Metal’: Symbolic Exclusion and Cultural Dislikes. *American Sociological Review*, 61(5), 884–899.
- Calhoun, C. (1995). *Critical Social Theory: Culture, History, and the Challenge of Difference*. Oxford, U.K. and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Connell, R. W. (1983). *Which Way is Up? Essays on Sex, Class and Culture*. Sydney: George Allen and Unwin.
- Dahrendorf, R. (1959). *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Elster, J. (1981). Snobs. *London Review of Books*, 3(20), 10–12.
- Emirbayer, M. (1997). Manifesto for a Relational Sociology. *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(2), 281–317.
- Giddens, A. (1973). *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Giddens, A. (1980). Classes, Capitalism, and the State: A Discussion of Frank Parkin, Marxism and Class Analysis: A Bourgeois Critique. *Theory and Society*, 9, 877–880.
- Griller, R. (1996). The Return of the Subject? The Methodology of Pierre Bourdieu. *Critical Sociology*, 22(1), 3–28.
- Grusky, D. B., & Sørensen, J. B. (1998). Can Class Analysis be Salvaged? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(5), 1187–1234.

- Hall, J. R. (1992). The Capital(s) of Culture: A Nonholistic Approach to Status Situations, Class, Gender, and Ethnicity. In: M. Lamont & M. Fournier (Eds), *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality* (pp. 257–285). Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Honneth, A. (1995[1984]). The Fragmented World of Symbolic Forms: Reflections on Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture. In: *The Fragmented World of Symbolic Forms: Essays in Social and Political Philosophy* (pp. 184–201). Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press.
- Jenkins, R. (1992). *Pierre Bourdieu*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Johnston, L. (1986). *Marxism, Class Analysis and Socialist Pluralism: A Theoretical and Political Critique of Marxist Conceptions of Politics*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Kögler, H. H. (1997). Alienation as Epistemological Source: Reflexivity and Social Background After Mannheim and Bourdieu. *Social Epistemology*, 11(2), 141–164.
- Lamont, M. (1992). *Money, Morals, and Manners: The Culture of the French and American Upper-Middle Class*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Lash, S. (1990). *Sociology of Postmodernism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Lash, S. (1993). Pierre Bourdieu: Cultural Economy and Social Change. In: C. Calhoun, E. LiPuma & M. Postone (Eds), *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives* (pp. 193–211). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- MacIver, R. M. (1964[1942]). *Social Causation*. New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- Marx, K. (1981[1885]). *Capital*. Vol. II, D. Fernbach (Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.
- Marx, K. (1991[1894]). *Capital*. Vol. III, D. Fernbach (Trans.). London and New York: Penguin Books.
- McCall, L. (1992). Does Gender Fit? Bourdieu, Feminism, and Conceptions of Social Order. *Theory and Society*, 21(6), 837–867.
- Pakulski, J., & Waters, M. (1996). *The Death of Class*. London: Sage Publications.
- Parkin, F. (1971). *Class Inequality and Political Order: Social Stratification in Capitalist and Communist Societies*. New York and Washington: Praeger.
- Peterson, R. A., & Kern, R. M. (1996). Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore. *American Sociological Review*, 61(5), 900–907.
- Poulantzas, N. (1975[1974]). *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, D. Fernbach (Trans.). London: New Left Books.
- Poulantzas, N. (1978[1968]). *Political Power and Social Classes*, T. O'Hagan (Trans.). London: Verso.
- Przeworski, A. (1985). *Capitalism and Social Democracy*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Robinson, R. V., & Garnier, M. A. (1985). Class Reproduction Among Men and Women in France: Reproduction Theory on its Home Ground. *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(2), 250–280.
- Rupp, J. C. C. (1997). Rethinking Cultural and Economic Capital. In: J. R. Hall (Ed.), *Reworking Class* (pp. 221–241). Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Sewell, W. H. (1992). A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 98(1), 1–29.
- Somers, M. R. (1995). What's Political or Cultural about Political Culture and the Public Sphere? Toward an Historical Sociology of Concept Formation. *Sociological Theory*, 13(2), 113–144.
- Somers, M. R. (1997). Deconstructing and Reconstructing Class Formation Theory: Narrativity, Relational Analysis, and Social Theory. In: J. R. Hall (Ed.), *Reworking Class* (pp. 73–105). Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

- Swartz, D. (1997). *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Taylor, C. (1993). To Follow a Rule . . . In: C. Calhoun, E. LiPuma & M. Postone (Eds), *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives* (pp. 45–60). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Vandenberghe, F. (1999). ‘The Real is Relational’: An Epistemological Analysis of Pierre Bourdieu’s Generative Structuralism. *Sociological Theory*, 17(1), 32–67.
- Wacquant, L. J. D. (1993). From Ruling Class to Field of Power: An Interview with Pierre Bourdieu on La noblesse d’État. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 10, 19–44.
- Wacquant, L. J. D. (1999). The Double-Edged Sword of Reason: The Scholar’s Predicament and the Sociologist’s Mission. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2(3), 275–281.
- Weber, M. (1978[1918]). *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, E. Fischoff et al. (Trans.). Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: The University of California Press.
- Wright, E. O. (1985). *Classes*. London and New York: Verso.
- Wright, E. O. et al. (1998[1989]). *The Debate on Classes*. London and New York: Verso.
- Wright, E. O., Levine, A., & Sober, E. (1992). *Reconstructing Marxism: Essays on Explanation and the Theory of History*. London and New York: Verso.

## APPENDIX: ON VERIFICATION

The question of verification in *Distinction* is, alas, unclear enough to require a separate discussion. I have already indicated that, broadly speaking, validation of a causal hypothesis entails the demonstration of a homology between the structural relations constitutive of the *explanans* and those constitutive of the *explanandum*. That being said, however, if we leave aside the interpretive work devoted to the identification of habitus and the reconstruction of lifestyles, it is still the case that we are confronted with not one but two presentations meant to demonstrate a global homology between class positions and lifestyles in *Distinction* (compare Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 128–129, with 260, 340). The first is based mainly on data from INSEE, a statistical agency of the French government, while the second is produced from Bourdieu’s own survey data. It is difficult to know what the relation between them is. Nonetheless, we might take as clues, however vague, the fact that in the discussion surrounding the first (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 101ff.) we find constant reference to the “construction” of “theoretical” class and lifestyle structures, whereas the second contrasts to this an analysis meant to “draw out . . . immanent structures without imposing any presuppositions” (1984, p. 258). Though presumably without precedent in methodology textbooks, this would seem to imply that the first demonstration is intended as “something like” a confirmatory analysis, while the second is intended as “something like” an exploratory one – the full verification apparently requiring a correspondence between them. (To put it a bit pithily,

verification appears to entail a correspondence between corresponding correspondence diagrams, and thus, whatever else one may say about it, hardly evidences a “coherence” theory of truth.) What, in turn, could be the source of such an odd procedure?

One has not finished with theory, nor even with the construction of hypotheses, once one has subjected the hypothesis to verification . . . Every well-constructed experiment has the effect of intensifying the dialectic between reason and experiment, but only on condition that one has an adequate understanding of the results, even negative ones, that it produces, and asks oneself what reasons make the facts right to say no (Bourdieu, Chamboredon & Passeron, 1991, p. 61).

(This section of *Craft* presents quotations – affirmatively – from Popper and even Hempel.) The “dialectic” of which Bourdieu speaks implies that there is no magical threshold (e.g. “sig  $T < 0.05$ ”) beyond which we may deem the question of verification solved “for all practical purposes.” Conversely, the absence of such finality means that verification is a process which is *incremental and cumulative*, and entails the development of multiple (provisional) “proofs” capable reinforcing one another (see Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 506–507). Scientific demonstration is, at least in principle, permanently subject to extension and revision. The insistence on systematic “coherence,” which is certainly prominent in Bourdieu’s early epistemological writings (Bourdieu, 1968, pp. 686ff.), further suggests that the confirmation of theories can only be meaningful at the global level; more specifically, what must be tested are propositions about *systems* of *related* elements, not propositions about individual elements. Indeed, the impulse to explain “isolated facts” is roundly derided as “pointillist verification” (Bourdieu, Chamboredon & Passeron, 1991, p. 63).

In order to confirm the obdurate effect of the “reality principle” in and upon Bourdieu’s sociology, it is adequate to recall the most serious *failure* in *Distinction* – namely, the inability to document any fractional differentiation within the working class. To be sure, when confronted with this rather embarrassing lack of findings, Bourdieu prefers to hold out for better data rather than reconsider the theory: differences in the composition of capital within the working class “must be the source of differences in lifestyle and religious and political opinion” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 115). Yet can there be any question that, in the meantime, this “must” amounts to nothing more than the proverbial “impotent ought”? (For a sympathetic attempt to revise both the theory and meta-theory in light of Bourdieu’s failure, see Rupp, 1997.)

Griller’s appendix (1996, pp. 26–28) provides an impressive summation of the convoluted and labyrinthine (but perhaps not atypical, for just this reason) research process that resulted in *Distinction*. I do not, however, find the essay’s criticisms overly compelling, most of which (including the charge of

“positivism”) are supposed to be answerable by re-introducing “choice,” “will,” etc. In any event, Griller passes quickly over questions such as the relation between statistical technique – which, following Jenkins (1992, p. 60), is supposed to be merely “descriptive” – and verification (Griller, 1996, p. 9), apparently out of a dislike for “determinism” (as entailed by the concept of habitus) at the meta-theoretical level. On this view it would appear that the symbolic, for Bourdieu, can exhibit no significance in its own right (i.e. no status other than that of *result*).

# GENDER, CLASS AND WELFARE STATE FORMATION IN THE 21st CENTURY

Susan Thistle

## ABSTRACT

*We have entered a new moment of negotiation over gender, class and women's relationship to work at home and for pay that will shape policy formation in coming decades. I argue that underlying such debate is a profound transformation of women's labor. Focusing on the United States, I outline the recent breakdown of the gender division of labor among women of all backgrounds which has accompanied women's turn to paid work in the post-World War II years, and its consequences for both the market economy and the realization of new social policy. Women's move from household to wage work, like men's shift off the land, is opening struggles to replace lost arrangements for care, while also providing new legitimation and leverage for such rights. However, uneven breakdown of the gender division of labor, accentuating differences of race/ethnicity and class, threatens to derail such efforts. This perspective furthers development of a dynamic historical dimension in gender and social policy formation.*

---

**Bringing Capitalism Back for Critique by Social Theory, Volume 21, pages 115–142.**  
© 2002 Published by Elsevier Science Ltd.  
ISBN: 0-7623-0762-5



## INTRODUCTION

Scholars have now established gender's right to a place in the dominant discourse on welfare state formation. However, the dismantling of support for mothers' work within the home in the United States and Europe points to the need for further theoretical work if women are to achieve new policies shaped in their own interests.

Recent gains have been made in large part through noting emphasis on class and workers excluded issues central to women's lives, directing attention to inequalities of gender and family maintenance and enabling assessment of welfare state capacities in these areas. However, current policy debates reveal we are reaching the limits of this approach and entering a new moment of "turmoil in the universe of political discourse," (Jenson & Mahon, 1993, p. 79) marked by shifting stances toward gender, class, and work, both paid and unpaid in form. While most calls for new policies, pointing to the changing realities of women's lives, stress the need to shape such programs around women's location in the labor force, others counter women's care giving role is being ignored, a neglect which particularly disadvantages poor women and women of color. If we are not to cede definition of women's relationship to work and family to other interests, or sink in a morass of moral debate, we need deeper understanding of the actual structural changes underlying this turmoil, not just in the larger economy but in the realm of care giving itself. Here I provide a path forward, through grounding current debates over social policy in women's own changing relationship to work and the state.

In developing this argument, I challenge the belief that focus upon workers and class serves to exclude women from analyses of social policy. Rather, I argue these areas have been viewed too narrowly, focusing on the formation of a primarily white male working class, whose experience has been imposed upon and has obscured the entrance of other groups into the labor force. Women of all backgrounds in the United States are now undergoing a radical transition from domestic tasks supported, however partially, by men or the state to work for wages as their primary means for support. Behind this turn to the labor force lies the collapse of the old arrangements of support for care, bringing a profound transformation of women's labor, and gender itself. While this shift from household to wage labor gives women new political leverage, it also involves serious and unequal losses. Recognition of the dual-sided nature of this event provides a way to realize new provisions for both care giving and paid work in egalitarian and progressive forms.

Having uncovered and traced the gendered nature of welfare state construction over the course of the twentieth century, scholars on both sides of the

Atlantic are now analyzing current developments in gender and social policy, outlining variations in existing welfare states and their differing effects on gender inequality in the labor force and at home.<sup>1</sup> Close examination of how single mothers actually manage to provide for themselves and their children has furthered such analysis, generating specific proposals to meet women's current needs.<sup>2</sup> These proposals are mainly shaped around women's, and men's, location in the labor force, as in calls for child care, and improvement of working conditions and wages (see, for example, Bergmann & Hartmann, 1995; Gordon, 1995; Hartmann & Spalter-Roth, 1996). To achieve any of these policies, which are realistic and focused in nature, would be a great gain for women and their families.

However, there is concern that in focusing upon the labor force we are losing sight of the importance of care giving, an omission especially threatening for poor women of color (Kittay, 1998; Mink, 1995b, 1998a, b; Roberts, 1995). Such concerns are given weight by the long history of societal neglect and denial of the homemaking tasks done by women of color, with focus solely upon their use as wage workers. We may be recreating such inequality in new forms. The provision of care through low-paid workers, for example, driving much of the growth of the service sector draws heavily upon the labor of women of color while providing no support for their work at home.<sup>3</sup>

Better understanding of the transformation of women's work now taking place makes clear the importance of concerns about care giving. Entwined in the plight of poor single mothers are several needs, not only to replace the supports for care giving tasks which are now breaking down, but also to mediate full dependence upon the labor force. Untangled, these issues have great relevance for all women. Further, concerns over care giving contain perceptions of other losses, of space for human intimacy as our lives are engulfed more fully by an expanding wage economy, and of the privileges entailed in continued access to the gender division of labor by many married women in the absence of new public provisions for domestic tasks. Thus, focus on care giving widens understanding of women's necessary rights to new support.<sup>4</sup> However, such emphasis has also raised concerns about recreating old gender inequalities based on women's confinement in domestic and nurturing tasks.

Jenson (1997) opens a path toward resolution of this problem in noting that welfare states have always been about care.<sup>5</sup> Greater understanding of the relationship between welfare state formation, economic development and the breakdown of earlier provisions for care in men's, and now women's, lives provides a way of uniting demands for social policy shaped around the labor force and care giving tasks.

A central problem in debates over gender and social policy is that they are set against a still weakly delineated backdrop of social and economic change, the general contours of which are based upon the lives of men. This has resulted in poor grasp of the radically changing basis for women's new claims to entitlement.<sup>6</sup>

While some scholars are now analyzing the impact of economic restructuring on social policy for women, important alterations have taken place within the home as well as outside it.<sup>7</sup> Early work addressing gender and welfare state formation in the United States at the turn of the century recognized such policy was shaped around a gender division of labor, reinforcing the framework holding women in domestic tasks against the threats raised by industrialization. In many recent analyses, this concept has receded from sight, or been extended without perception of crucial alterations in its nature.

Here I provide an understanding of the dynamically changing relationship between the gender division of labor and a maturing market economy in the late 20th century United States, as it has unfolded in differing ways among white women and women of color. In doing so, I place women's household work, both in care giving and home maintenance, at the center of analysis, as we can then clearly see the changes taking place in this arrangement of labor, and their importance for current policy debates.

In broad terms I argue that behind women's entrance into the labor force lies a still poorly understood event, the collapse of their older means of support, however partial, within marriage, for reasons far larger than the decline of men's income. While the gender division of labor was initially sustained in differing ways in encounters with a developing industrial economy, in the years after World War II this old arrangement has been radically broken down, turning successive waves of women to wages for support. I briefly sketch three moments in this process in the period from 1950 to 2000, and the consequences of this shift for the current wave of prosperity in the United States.

I then draw out the implications of such change both for theories of gender and welfare state formation and actual realization of new social policy addressing care giving and protections against the market as well as gains within the labor force. I end by pointing to similar shifts in other advanced industrialized countries, adding an historically dynamic or temporal dimension to gendered assessments of welfare states which recognizes radical shifts in women's own work and accompanying policy arrangements.

My intention here is to provide a clear understanding of the recent structural transformations in women's own work which underlie this new moment of political opportunity for women. This approach grounds policy arguments in real rather than moral terms, in the historical realities of actual losses, gains

and possibilities. Translation of such possibilities into concrete gains is a matter of political struggle, in which organization around such issues as differences of income, race/ethnicity, age or sexuality as well as gender and class in the broadest sense comes into play. However, at present examinations of policy alone, and its impact upon gender relations, rather than the reverse, dominate, while considerations of economic restructuring focus primarily on the market economy, with little attention to changes in the home. While class and work have monopolized discussions of male-centered policy analysis, these concepts remain underdeveloped in analyses of women's lives, reflecting a gender bias in theory itself.

In sum, I argue women's current interest in and demands for new social policy are tied to a recent and historic move from household to wage labor which, much like men's turn to work for wages, is opening struggles for a new set of policies to provide for tasks which can no longer be carried out within the old gender division of labor. However, this move is also giving women an effective base from which to claim entitlement to new supports for domestic and care giving tasks.

Attention to the breakdown of the male breadwinner system of support accompanying recent shifts in social policy has directed focus toward the importance of considering changes in women's own work. However, as the term itself suggests, men's lessened ability to support women's work in the home often serves as explanation for such change.

A few scholar-activists have stressed the profound alteration of women's own work in recent decades, stressing women's massive movement into the labor force and alterations in family life, such as the rise in female-headed families, and increased financial independence and autonomy for many women (Bergmann, 1990; Hartmann, 1987; Hartmann & Spalter-Roth, 1996). However, while providing some deeper understanding of these events, emphasis has been upon the need for new social policy to address the changing realities of women's lives. Also, though it is recognized gender relations can affect the larger economy, causal explanations have focused primarily on the labor force rather than women's work in the home.<sup>8</sup>

Folbre has been key in bringing women's work in the home into discussions of the economy. Early perception that the relationship between an expanding industrial capitalism and men's control of women's household labor was conflictual and changing in nature (Ferguson & Folbre, 1981) has been borne out by recent events, as women's turn to paid work yields profits for employers while undercutting men's access to their domestic labor. In more recent work, Folbre (1994) provides a clear overview of the collective group actions and constraints shaping changes in the handling of social reproduction in the United

States and several other countries. In looking at the United States, she focuses on the issue of dependents and how the move to a wage economy increased the costs of children and elders while weakening family support for their care, leading to early struggles over policy. She also traces shifts in social policy in the post-World War II period, showing how current programs provide very poorly for children and parenting.

Folbre and others stressing the changing realities of women's lives provide the essential theoretical foundation for understanding current battles over social policy. My intention is to contribute to such analysis through drawing out another side of such changes. While Folbre focuses on the rising cost of children and alterations in social policy in the post-World War II period, I shift the angle of vision to women themselves, and lessened need for and interest in supporting their household work, not only in raising children, but also in maintaining the home and adult men. I trace the dismantling of this overall framework of support by different collective interests in both the private and public realm, and its intersection with changes in the wage economy. While analysts have focused on the rise in female-headed families, I am arguing the increase in these families and their presence among the poor, the rise in divorce, the decline of the male breadwinner ethic, and battles over abortion, the ERA, and AFDC are all intertwined pieces of a larger structural shift, the collapse of the gender division of labor.

Until we see this historic event clearly, we are vulnerable to reframing care giving as a labor of love borne at increasing costs to women as even minimal support for such work collapses. Also, fleshing out the economic processes behind current political battles reestablishes the connections between economic and political changes, providing a stronger explanation than those focusing on policy alone, or conservative arguments that women must be stripped of state support to force them to work.

Finally, clearer understanding of the changes taking place in women's own work provides some sense of why the opening of the 21st century is a key moment of potential for women's realization of social policy framed in their own interests. To focus upon the United States, it is widely recognized that the post-World War II period marked a watershed in women's movement into paid work, with their labor force participation climbing as much from 1950–1975 as from 1890 to 1950 (Goldin, 1990).<sup>9</sup> I am arguing another crucial event also took place in these years, the breakdown of the gender division of labor. This involved not just a rise in divorce and female-headed families, but also key legal and cultural changes ending the performance of domestic tasks within marriage as women's central means of support. This loss of alternative support has set the stage for women's realization of their interests as wage workers.<sup>10</sup>

In sum, dramatic changes have occurred in the latter half of the 20th century, now and only now placing the majority of women fully in the labor force and giving them new resources for demands upon the state, men, and employers. Before considering the political potential of these changes further, I first explain their unfolding in greater detail.

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF WOMEN'S LABOR

Clear grasp the dynamically changing relationship between gender and a maturing industrial economy in the United States first requires a return to the concept of the gender division of labor. Women's work within the home has long been structured within a set of social relationships through which men controlled, utilized, and supported, however minimally, women's domestic and reproductive labor, most centrally through the institution of marriage. However, this method of handling tasks of family maintenance is not a constant, but has changed dramatically as industrialization has progressed.

To understand the radical alteration of this relationship in the years after World War II, we must look briefly at initial encounters between the gender division of labor and the developing commercial and industrial economy. A gender division of labor within the family, or women's performance of domestic tasks for men, existed in early America among both white families and those of color. Women's household labor was essential to their husbands and society as a whole. Prospective immigrants were advised that "a wife and family, so far from being a burden . . . always prove sources of wealth [as] the wife of the new settler has many domestic duties to perform" (Howison, in Cohen, 1988, p. 71). Similarly, historians have noted "[a] wife and children were important assets to the male tenant" in sharecropping (Tolnay, 1984, p. 310). While it was once emphasized industrialization "tended to rob women of her productive labor" (Schreiner, 1978[1911], p. 50), scholars have uncovered women's continued responsibility for a heavy set of tasks throughout the 19th century. The expansion of commercial and industrial capitalism over this period, however, threatened repeatedly to impose new demands on women's labor and offered alternatives to work within the home. A large body of research has established how women's performance of household tasks was sustained and reinforced in initial encounters with a developing industrial economy in the 19th and early 20th centuries, in part through social policy itself. Resistance to the demands of the new economy, however, was achieved primarily for white women, with another set of tasks imposed upon many women of color, in slavery, sharecropping and work for wages.<sup>11</sup>

The early stages of industrialization and the move to the city eroded women's household work, in part as unequal distribution of the gains from

development enabled some women to hire others. However, at the turn to the 20th century working-class men continued to assert their need for a wife's "maternal and . . . household duties" (Smart in Kessler-Harris, 1990, p. 9). Although many men did not achieve a family wage, a wife's household labor remained an important contribution to daily survival, and husbands' earnings, however minimal, the primary source of its support. Thus, while approximately 30% of married women of color contributed to family income through their own work for pay in the first half of the twentieth century (Goldin, 1990), it is important to recognize this was not a full reliance upon wages as at present, but a gendered version of "internal colonialism," in which some women of color combined household work for their husbands with very low-paid work at the margins of the industrial labor force, eking out a living from both tasks.<sup>12</sup>

In sum, whether through public policies or private strategies, the gender division of labor was maintained through the first half of the 20th century in differing forms, though subject to increasing strains and conflicts. Prior to World War II, over two-thirds of married women of color and an even greater percentage of white wives drew their support almost entirely from performance of domestic tasks within marriage (Sorensen & McLanahan, 1987).

In the years following World War II, however, further encounter with a maturing market economy has led not to reinforcement of the gender division of labor, but instead to its collapse. This radical transformation of women's labor and its implications have not been fully realized. The issue is not that women no longer bear responsibility for domestic tasks. They do. However, increasingly such labor is no longer supported, however minimally, by men or the state, and growing numbers of women of all backgrounds must now rely solely upon their own wages for their livelihood.

In the first decades after World War II, women surged into the labor force at unprecedented rates. Married women dominated this move. "Before 1950," the economist Goldin notes, "the increase in married women's labor force participation was slow and evolutionary, but after 1950 the process quite simply explodes" among both African-American and white women (1990, p. 120).

This movement into the labor force was not due simply to an expanding post-war economy or a decline in men's wages, but also to the breakdown of the structures framing and supporting women's household work. Much like men's movement into the labor force in the 19th century, the dismantling of this older arrangement and women's turn from household to wage labor has occurred in successive waves, furthered both by periods of economic expansion and decline. I briefly sketch three moments in this process before considering its implications for welfare state formation.

First, in the initial years of prosperity after World War II, the takeover of many household tasks by an expanding post-war economy also exerting an increased demand for workers made the old gender division of labor feel restrictive to many – to women seeing opportunities outside the home, employers seeking access to new workers, and men and a state no longer wanting to support women in full-time household labor.

Employers anxious for workers abandoned their prohibitions against hiring married women, while a booming economy also opened potential for reduction of domestic tasks. Basic household appliances, for example, spread to almost all households in the 1950s, leading to reassessments of wives' use of their time.<sup>13</sup> “[H]ousewives with little prior experience,” primarily older women whose families needed income, led the way into the labor force (Smith & Ward, 1984, p. 80). Though “black women show[ed] movements surprisingly similar to those of white women” (Goldin, 1990, p. 22), young African-American mothers entered the labor force over a decade earlier than white women of the same cohort, with challenges to old domestic roles also occurring earlier (Giddings, 1984; Walker, 1981).<sup>14</sup> In the mid-1960s they were followed by white women finding little to do at home. “I [had thought] . . . that being some man’s wife and some child’s mother would occupy my mind and my hands for the rest of my life . . .” the sociologist Lillian Rubin (1979) wrote of her own experience as a 38-year old housewife in 1962, “[Instead] I awoke each day wondering how to fill the time.” Growing engagement in paid work increased women’s efforts to alter the structures holding them in the home (Luker, 1984; Mansbridge, 1986).

A lessened need for women’s household labor also turned men from the breadwinner ethic (Ehrenreich, 1984). Assessments of marriage in emotional rather than economic terms brought a sharp rise in divorce in the mid-1960s, joined with changes in legislation stating concretely men no longer had to support women they once married on a life-long basis, who should derive their support from wages (Jacob, 1988). The federal government also began to shift support for poor mothers from work in the home to work for wages, attaching work requirements to their aid. A series of legal decisions concerning sex discrimination, abortion, and pregnancy as well as divorce began to dismantle the legal and cultural framings of the old gender division of labor, joined with a sharp rise in female-headed families and their presence among the poor (Freeman, 1990; Sorensen & McLanahan, 1987).

The decline of the American economy in the mid-1970s and 1980s delivered a second blow to the already weakened framework of support for women’s domestic labor, one that fell disproportionately upon some minority families. The disappearance of traditional manufacturing jobs hit African-American and Latino men with low levels of education especially hard, accelerating break-



down of support for women's household work. While Wilson (1987) has stressed the reduced attractiveness of these men as marriage partners, I argue alternatively lessened need for women's household labor, once crucial to men's work in fields and factories, now made marriage a burden for men with little income.<sup>15</sup>

Economic difficulties brought a contradictory alliance among faltering businesses, politicians and workers who argued for a return to the male breadwinner family while attacking it from different angles. Conservative politicians championed traditional family values while pursuing economic strategies of low pay and hostility toward unions that ended the family wage for many, while white workers encouraged the federal government's increasing withdrawal of support for poor single mothers' work in the home.

By the end of the 1980s, over 70% of women in their prime adult years were in the labor force, compared to less than one-third forty years earlier (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990, 1950), and a series of legal decisions had taken apart earlier rulings enforcing women's location in household work. As Freeman (1990, p. 457) has noted:

Until 1971 the judicial approach to women was that their rights, responsibilities, opportunities, and obligations were essentially determined by their position in the family. Women were viewed first and foremost as wives and mothers . . . . Today most of such laws have been found unconstitutional.

Thus, it is not simply the decline of the male breadwinner wage, or men's access to any wage, that brought the collapse of the gender division of labor, but also a diminishing need for women's household work joined with opportunities and pressures elsewhere which made the framework supporting such work appear restrictive to many groups. In a similar manner, lessened need for laborers following the decline of the cotton industry joined with Northern demand for workers led to a multi-sited rupturing of ties holding African-Americans in the South, and an ending of social policy shaped around such labor (McAdam, 1982, Quadagno, 1984).

Beneath the collapse of traditional manufacturing jobs, a new sector has been developing, driven in large part by further penetration of a maturing capitalist economy into the home. The alteration of marriage and the federal government's abandonment of AFDC in 1996 has created a ready supply of workers allowing the rapid growth of a two-tiered service sector. On the lower tier especially, women are the central source of labor, and, after computer services, tasks once done by women in the home, such as the provision of meals, health services, or child and elder care, are the most dynamic areas of this sector. The conversion of these domestic chores into goods or services for sale, and

women's labor into work done for wages has opened a new cycle of productivity and profit. However, women themselves, especially women of color, have realized few of the returns to such development. Thus, women now face the challenge of trying to redistribute some of this surplus into new social programs and other benefits, through struggles classically seen as central to welfare state formation.

Taken together, these changes frame a clear moment in the late 20th century in which women's primary means of support shifted from household to wage labor. This recent and radical transformation of women's labor has opened a moment of new potential for women. However, translation of such opportunity into actual gains is a matter of political struggle, a crucial piece of which is women's own recognition of their identity and interests as wage workers. Before exploring this point further, I first draw out the consequences of this perspective for women's place in theories of welfare state formation.

## **GENDER AND THEORIES OF WELFARE STATE FORMATION**

Grasp of the historic transition women are now undergoing from household to wage labor provides an effective means of placing gender at the center of established theories of welfare state formation. Such theories, whether emphasizing divisions between workers and capitalists or institutional processes and the role of policy officials, generally acknowledge the underlying role played by industrialization itself in breaking down old social relationships and opening new struggles over rights.<sup>16</sup> Issues of gender were absent from these theories, and were initially developed at a distance from such discussion. However, scholars of gender have now claimed the larger theoretical terrain as their own.

A central means of bringing gender in to such discussion has been creation of a further dimension focused on issues of family maintenance and other areas of gender inequality. This has led to more sophisticated understanding of the factors shaping social policy formation in these areas, and the effects of different policy outcomes upon gender inequality. However, gender is often seen as a constant or as constantly changing in these accounts, threatening again the impasse of equality and difference which has obstructed women's political efforts in the past. Further, this approach runs the danger of implying class struggle is reserved for men.

I argue women can make a more direct claim upon welfare state theory, through bringing the dynamics of industrialization to the foreground again briefly, and considering their effect upon women's own lives. This does not mean reducing these to a general process of "modernization," measured in terms

of levels of urbanization or per capita income. Rather, at the heart of such change lies a transformation of labor, or ways of meeting human needs, opening as well new political resources for realizing such needs.

Such transformation is central to much welfare state theory, which has seen men's turn to wages as their central means of support as resulting in demands for new rights and struggles over distribution, as workers try to blunt the inequalities of the market (Esping-Anderson, 1990; Marshall, 1965). Another essential component of these struggles, lost sight of in recent years, is the replacement of older arrangements for care (Wilensky, 1975).

However, the making of a white male working class has dominated such analysis. Yet, like the process of industrialization itself, there is not one universal moment or pattern of working class formation, even within the boundaries of a given nation-state. Rather, this process has taken place in a series of waves, with exclusion from and struggle for social welfare rights tied to the timing of movement out of earlier structures of work imposed on the basis of race and gender.

When women's rapid increase in labor force participation in the years following World War II is understood as the moment of full transition into the wage labor force, a spelling out of the problems raised by industrialization provides an understanding of women's current interest in and right to new social programs. One important way the dynamics of industrialization led to demands for new social policy was that its undermining of older organizations of labor ended as well as many past ways of meeting people's needs for care. As earlier theorists have noted, being "pushed off the land and into wage employment" brought a collapse of older structures of support, generating demands for "a partial shift of traditional family functions . . . – to the state, school and industry" (Wilensky, 1975, pp. 55, 68). Thus, with men's turn to work for wages, tasks of care did not disappear. Rather, they were no longer supported within the old organization of labor. In the United States, white men's turn to wage work led to struggles for programs to handle periods of unemployment, poor health, and old age, and wages to cover women's household work, though the manner in which these were realized was a matter of political contestation.

With women's movement into the labor force on a long-term basis in the post-World War II years, the older framework supporting women's performance of domestic tasks has now been largely dismantled. While structurally similar to the process undergone earlier by a male working class, the situation of women differs in that collapse of their older structure of work has left a somewhat different set of tasks unmet, full-time care of children being the most obvious.

Women's need for and right to a new set of social policies thus rests on movement out of a different structure of work than that earlier left by men, an

issue of socially constructed rather than essential difference. In sum, women's historic turn to wages as their central means of support, like that undergone by men before them, is opening struggles for support for care giving tasks once provided for, at least partially, within marriage, and for protections against the market, while also providing new legitimation and leverage for such rights.

Realization of potential gains is not inevitable, however, but crucially tied to women's perception and defense of their interests as wage workers. Political process models have evolved detailing elements contributing to political outcomes. My point here is that such assessments of resources and opportunity structures were initially developed in the context of established accounts of larger underlying economic and political shifts based upon the lives of men. The deeper structural changes in women's lives thus needed greater articulation here, further laying the theoretical groundwork which can give direction to women's current struggles. However, brief discussion of elements central to such models provides further evidence of conditions favorable to women's political efforts at this time.

Like other groups before them, some women still resist the intrusion of the market, holding to the role of homemaking. However, as increasing numbers choose or are forced to rely upon their own wages for support, women's perception of their interests as wage workers is also growing. Recent surveys find women's central concerns now focus on their position in the labor force, in desires for higher pay, greater respect in their jobs, and new policies supporting domestic tasks shaped around paid work (Women's Bureau, 1998). Concerns over poor single mothers also articulate women's interests when thrown upon the market for survival.

Women's turn to the labor force has also given them greater economic and political resources. Increasing engagement in paid work has brought gains in income, with each recent cohort of women earning more than its mothers (Bianchi & Spain, 1996). The gender gap in voting has also widened over the past two decades, tied initially to women's rising labor force participation and more recently to their growing interest in new social policy. Women workers now make up a larger portion of the new Democratic constituency, giving greater weight to their interests (Manza & Brooks, 1999). Thus, structural opportunity lies in the realignment of voting constituencies accompanying the shift from a manufacturing to service economy and takeover of women's household work, an event also undermining the base of patriarchal power.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, while some predict support for domestic tasks in the United States will be met through the market in contrast to most European countries (see, for example, Michel, 1999), I argue we are still at an early moment in such negotiations. The United States may indeed rely more on private provisions.

However, the New Deal represented a sizeable gain for a segment of the male working class, and suggests women can make similar gains even within liberal regimes. It is likely some new programs addressing care giving tasks will be realized, if women can perceive their rights as long-term wage workers and make claims upon employers, men, and the state from this position.

Two central issues threaten women's realization of new policy. First, other groups, such as a weakened but still viable patriarchy, employers, or the state, may continue to define women's position in the labor force in terms of their own interests, as occurred with the recent undercutting of the family wage and demolition of AFDC.

Secondly, women may divide further among themselves. Care giving is an important potentially divisive issue. At heart populist in nature, it is a 'two-faced Janus' which looks backward and forward at the same time, in recognizing and attempting to prevent or replace a real loss.

Those concerned about the situation of poor single mothers see this loss of provision for care clearly. They also voice a concern central to earlier welfare state constructions, that of the need for protection from the brutalities of the market. Further, they note perceptively that work done for wages is indeed more alienated labor than care of one's own family and that time for human needs is disappearing as yet another segment of life is absorbed by an expanding economy. Further attention to these criticisms and demands from the perspective of the transformation of women's labor now taking place can extend their relevance beyond poor single mothers, widening support for such programs.

Many women, struggling to juggle work at home and for wages, resent the idea that industrialization may have reduced household tasks, while expressing hostility toward programs enabling poor single mothers to stay at home. Yet the real injustice is that the time freed by the takeover of many domestic tasks has gone not to women, but to employers, who have taken too much of women's time while paying too little for it. The profits realized by the expanding service sector, drawing heavily on women's labor, have helped fuel a new moment of prosperity in the United States, but the majority of women have seen no rise in their wages while social policies supporting domestic tasks are at a low ebb. Realization of this unfair distribution of the gains from women's increased productivity has strong potential to motivate demands for new supports for care giving among women.

However, I would point to a new conjunction of gender, class and race that may derail such efforts. Concealed within the private provisions for care seen as the alternative to social policy by many analysts are two very different strategies. Again, to see these both clearly we need to pull the gender division of labor to the foreground.

As increasing numbers of women work full-time, those employed in the upper-tier of the service sector can indeed afford to hire others to carry out their domestic tasks, as some analysts have emphasized. However, I argue in itself this arrangement is insufficient to stall demands for public policy, as even well-paid women workers find private provisions for care costly and unreliable.<sup>18</sup>

However, many women are coping with domestic tasks by limiting their involvement in paid work. This pattern is more predominant in Europe, but even in the United States, while three-quarters of married women with children under eighteen are employed, almost half work part-time (Bianchi & Spain, 1996, p. 21) For most of these women, husbands' wages enable their domestic work at home. In sum, a new, modified version of the gender division of labor also appears to be stabilizing, in which men support women's household work on a part-time basis and continue to reap the benefits of such labor.

Together, these two arrangements may offer a sufficient number of women ways of meeting domestic demands to defuse concerns over the crisis in care giving. The result would be the concretization of a divergence similar to that seen in the 19th century, with a segment of predominantly white women managing to secure space for their domestic tasks while poor women, a group in which women of color are over-represented, are left to struggle with both sets of tasks, a situation particularly difficult for single mothers. Thus, as in assessments of women's situation in the 19th century United States, a rhetoric focused on paid work is obscuring the privileges of continued access to a now-modified gender division of labor.

In sum, unequal breakdown of the gender division of labor may stall realization of policy shaped in women's interests. It is this unequal breakdown that some critics of the demise of AFDC are protesting. This has led to some efforts to restore state support for women's full-time work within the home. However, such efforts look backward to an increasingly obsolete framing of the gender division of labor, while alienating full-time women workers who cannot afford to hire help or work fewer hours.

Policies which address the needs of all these groups of women provide a common path forward. The key is to seek programs which provide more time for the home as well as the labor force for all women and men, in new gender and class equal forms. Family leave, even if paid, would be only a small gesture in this direction. We need to give all women and men the right and the means to work less than full-time. Universal child and other dependent care support allotments, higher wages, and a shorter work week without loss of pay or job status are steps toward realization of this goal.<sup>19</sup> We should not dismiss such efforts as unfeasible from the start. The point is to create political legitimacy

for policies claiming more space and time for the home, in new gender-equal ways, as well as at work, using women's new base in the labor force as a means to achieve such demands.

To frame these demands effectively, without bogging down in backward-looking efforts to restore the old gender division of labor, we must anchor them in clear understanding of the real historical changes which have occurred in women's own work, adding a new dimension to assessments of social policy.

## HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE DIMENSIONS

I have outlined a recent and radical transformation of women's labor in the United States underlying a fundamental shift in social policy from women's work in the home to work for wages. This shift has great potential for women, though currently it is framed primarily in conservative terms.

Recent comparative analyses provide evidence of a similar sea change in gender and social policy in European countries. In the decades after World War II, married women's labor force participation increased dramatically in Europe as well as the United States, although to varying degrees in different countries. This turn to wage work has been accompanied by a dismantling of earlier social policy arrangements framed around women's work within the home. Lewis (1995), for example, has described the prevalence of male-breadwinner models in early twentieth century Europe, and important alterations in these models in recent decades. By the 1970s in Sweden, she states, "the basis for women's social entitlements was transformed from that of dependent wife to worker." In France, policy supporting women's work in the home was subjected to attacks in the 1970s and 1980s similar to those seen in the United States, and even in Britain the male breadwinner model has been significantly altered. The retrenchment of social policy among once-socialist countries also involves a dismantling of similar earlier policy arrangements.

These important changes make clear the need for further development of an historically dynamic or temporal dimension in considerations of variations of social policy (see also Williams, 1995), enabling their assessments in real historical rather than moral terms. Here, I want to pull out two markedly different moments of social policy formation addressing issues of gender.

In the first moment, seen in early industrializing countries at the beginning of the twentieth century, social policy was shaped centrally around the gender division of labor, or women's care giving role in the home. In the largest sense, the issue is how social policy first mediates the relationship between an emerging capitalist or state-socialist economy and an earlier structure of labor, which is initially sustained and drawn upon rather than broken down.

There have been three main versions of this arrangement. The first defended women's work in the home against the demands of wage work, while a second supported the integration of women's household work with work in the labor force of a secondary nature. I would also draw attention to a third arrangement, characterized by the absence of any policy alleviating the double burden and a resort to private strategies, as among African-American women in the United States. Further variations of this initial arrangement are also now unfolding in more recently developing countries, shaped by elements delineated in existing studies and such factors as alternate paths toward industrialization, higher levels of technological development, and a more aggressive world market.

In the second major moment, occurring in advanced industrialized countries in recent years, we are seeing the dismantling of earlier social policies framed around the home and the emergence of variations shaped around women's turn to wages. Three patterns of relationship to work at home and for pay, joined with budding social policy arrangements, are emerging in this later moment. First, in women's increasing labor force attachment and earnings and the rising numbers of unmarried women, with or without children, we see a growing reliance upon women's own wages as their primary means of support. Such reliance is generating demands for state support shaped around women's position in the labor force or, especially in liberal regimes, private reliance upon the market to provide for domestic tasks.

However, a second pattern of part-time paid work and household work supported within marriage is also emerging as a dominant post-World War II arrangement, stalling or even reversing women's movement into the labor force. Like peasants with one foot in the rice paddy and the other in the mill, many women are drawing support from both marriage and the market. In Britain and Sweden, for example, part-time work predominates among married women, and has increased significantly in France. In the United States, only 38% of married women with children under eighteen are full-time year-round workers, though the percentage employed full-time has more than doubled since 1970 (Bianchi & Spain, 1996). Social policy reinforcing such straddling, in which domestic tasks are accomplished through a modified gender division of labor, is also appearing. Alternatively, private reliance upon marriage as well as the market may defuse demands for new provisions for domestic tasks.

All these responses provide either no support for time in the home or protections against the market, or do so in gender unequal forms which also heighten inequities among women. Most centrally, they do little for a third group of women who are being stripped of all support from men or the state for their domestic tasks while still having very limited access to the labor force. These women face being left stranded between the two worlds of work in a deep



chasm of poverty or trapped in poorly-paid jobs which cannot support their families.<sup>20</sup>

The continued breakdown of the old gender division of labor and women's increasing reliance upon wages offer potential for another resolution if both sides of the transformation of women's work are recognized. Women in the labor force are now realizing the domestic world they have lost, while rife with inequity, provided some space for care and love. If this loss is honored, and the economic and political realities of its demise recognized and understood, women in the labor force and/or outside of marriage may recognize their common desire and right to new supports for time at home as well as in paid work.

At present, women's policy rights as wage workers have been framed primarily by other interests. However, to see such arrangements or the current retreat towards marriage and the market as final resolutions is "unduly pessimistic," as Quadagno (1998) has warned.<sup>21</sup> Rather, I would emphasize we are at the beginning of a new moment of negotiation. Resistance to new policy by employers, men, or the state may prove vulnerable to challenge by women workers increasingly cognizant of their rights and capable of playing these groups against each other. The recent rollback in social provision seen in the United States and Europe involves in part the dismantling of obsolete arrangements between gender and industrial economies which, while fraught with danger, offers progressive potential. Clear recognition of the transformation of women's work and labor underlying this moment can aid realization of new provisions for care giving and paid work in gender and class equal forms.

## CONCLUSION

Both in the area of welfare state theory and in efforts to realize new social policy, efforts are now being made to articulate policy defined in women's own interests. Scholars of gender gained initial access to the domain of established welfare state theory by challenging its focus upon class and workers and establishing a further dimension addressing state-gender relationships. Yet current debates over actual policy proposals reveal we have entered a new time of turbulence in the relationship between gender, class, and work at home and for pay. A key theme is the need for programs shaped around women's new location in the labor force. Others fear this will consign women, especially single mothers of color, to long hours at low paid work apart from their own families, or to a deep poverty devoid of any income from the market or the state.

I have argued that behind such debate over care giving and paid work, and the current crisis in social policy, lies a profound transformation of women's labor, and gender relations themselves. We are seeing the breakdown not just of individual marriages, but of women's whole older ways of life and means of support, tied less to men's declining income than to the dynamically changing relationship between women's own work and maturing market economies.

In the United States, for example, the gender division of labor was initially sustained in differing ways in encounters with a developing industrial economy. However, in the years after World War II this old arrangement has been radically broken down by different groups of women, men, employers and state officials, in a series of steps intersecting with sectoral shifts in the larger economy, turning successive waves of women to wages for support. This transformation of women's labor and tasks has culminated in a new moment of prosperity. However, women have realized few of the benefits from such economic expansion, while bearing much of its costs.

Grasp of the historic transition women are now undergoing gives gender a clear place in established theories of welfare state formation. Against the belief that focus upon workers and class excludes women from theories or programs of the welfare state, I have argued these categories have been viewed too narrowly. Much as men's turn to wage work led to struggles for programs to handle periods of unemployment, poor health, and old age, women's move from household to wage labor is opening demands for new provisions to replace old supports for care giving tasks, while also providing new legitimation and leverage for such rights. Women's changing base of support, intersecting with sectoral shifts in the wage economy, has also given women greater economic and political resources, and opened a new moment of opportunity by increasing their importance to employers and political parties while undercutting the basis of patriarchal power.

Women's position in the labor force is still vulnerable to definition in terms of other interests, in part as women may divide further among themselves. While some analysts have argued women in liberal regimes are meeting their care giving needs through the market, I argue rhetoric focused on the labor force has concealed another strategy in the United States, in which women are securing space for domestic tasks through a combination of marriage and part-time employment. Unequal access to this modified form of the gender division of labor also divides women, leading some to seek restoration of state supports for full-time care giving.

The way forward is to recognize the dual-sided nature of women's turn to the labor force, involving the breakdown of their older means of support and provisions for care giving as well as a turn to reliance upon wages. Such break-

down has imposed strains upon all women, due to unequal distribution of the gains resulting from this event. A widened political discourse calling for programs which provide more time for the home as well as labor force in new gender and class equal forms can address the needs of all women, while women's position as wage workers offers new potential for the realization of such rights.

The transformation of women's labor and emergence of new arrangements of gender, class and social policy is not confined to the United States, but is unfolding in varied ways in other advanced industrialized countries. In sum, women of all backgrounds in many countries are now undergoing an historic transition from domestic tasks supported, however partially, by men or the state to work for wages as their primary means of support. This new moment of working class formation, I argue in contrast to recent pessimism, offers great potential for a new wave of welfare state creation and the translation of women's needs into a wide range of rights at home and in the labor force.

## NOTES

1. Excellent analyses, especially those of an historical comparative nature, have examined the relative strength of women's organizations, the working class, employers, political processes, and the discourses framing demands in explaining different policy outcomes. For some sense of the range of these analyses, see Abramovitz, 1996; Folbre, 1994; Gordon, 1990, 1994; Ladd-Taylor, 1994; Koven & Michel, 1993; Orloff, 1991; Pederson, 1993; Skocpol, 1992. For recent considerations of variations in gender and social policy formation see, for example, Fraser 1994; Lewis 1995, 1997; O'Connor, Orloff & Shaver, 1999; Sainsbury, 1996.

2. A common finding of these studies is that single mothers, even when on welfare, survive through combining income from a number of sources. A large portion of mothers receiving public assistance in the United States in the late 1980s and early 1990s, for example, worked for wages much of the year, refuting images of passive welfare dependency (Spalter-Roth & Hartmann, 1994; Hobson, 1994).

3. As Glenn (1987, p. 51) explains. "whereas the wife-mother roles of white working-class women were recognized and accorded respect by the larger society, the maternal and reproductive roles of racial ethnic women were ignored in favor of their roles as workers." The danger lies in repeating the focus of women's organizations in the early 1970s, in which a liberal feminism failed to see the limitations of work for wages, or the need to replace older arrangements for care which were being dismantled "For the first decade of NOW," Friedan recalls, "it seemed as if there were only two of us really interested in doing anything about child care . . ." (1981, p. 103).

4. Thus, clearer understanding of the problems faced by poor single mothers from this perspective can aid that goal described by Roberts (1995, p. 196): "to see the mothers whom the dominant society calls pathological as a source of positive insights for understanding mothers' work and for transforming social policy." For a perceptive discussion of the naming and translation of needs into rights, see Fraser, 1990.

5. However, while Jenson sees focus on workers and their mobilization as serving to displace care from the center of discussion, I am arguing the problem is the way in which workers are discussed. We have lost sight of what these workers were struggling for, and the historical dimension of these struggles, involving provision for older tasks no longer supported with men's move from off the land into the wage labor force, as well as gains in that new location.

6. Models of political process, such as McAdam's (1982) classic study of black insurgency, were also developed in the context of larger structural transformation involving the collapse of an older economic and social order and African-American movement into the urban industrial labor force, shaped by new claims for citizenship. Again, men's experience provides the implicit template. The deeper shifts in women's lives are still vaguely summarized as an entrance into the labor force, with little understanding of the earlier economic arrangements women are leaving. Thus, women's policy efforts are hobbled by lack of a clear grasp of the larger structural transformations taking place in their own lives, underlying and crucially shaping present struggles.

7. See Jenson and Mahon (1993), for example, for consideration of how restructuring of the Swedish economy has affected social policy. Gender itself is not simply shaped by the larger economy or social policy constructions. See Gordon (1993) for clearly articulated development of this point.

8. As Delphy and Leonard (1992 p. 66) note, "most work by marxist feminists has focused on the labour market. It has not developed Hartmann's sketch of materialist relations in domestic work."

9. Only 21.6% of married women, and 29.5% of all women, worked for pay in 1950; 50.1% of married women and 51.1% of all women were employed by 1980 (Goldin, 1990, p. 17). Women's labor force participation, which climbed sharply from 1950 on, accelerated until 1985, and then slowed (Shank, 1988), a trajectory capturing the historic moment of women's turn to the wage economy.

10. The precise framing of this dramatic shift is open to debate. In terms of legal changes, it might be seen as beginning with the 1963 Equal Pay Act, or the 1965 implementation of Title VII prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex, shifting centrally with the change in divorce law ending marriage as a life-long means of support for women, and culminating with the end of federal support for women's work in the home with the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

11. For discussion of women's work in the 19th century, see, for example, Boydston, 1990; Dill, 1990; Folbre, 1991; Jones, 1987. Though freed from such chores as the tending of gardens and poultry, most women still faced much cooking, cleaning, caring for fires, and sewing of clothes, though the burdens of housework differed across classes. Although scholars of women's housework have commonly seen household appliances and utilities entering most homes in the 1920s (Cowan, 1974; Hartmann, 1974), widespread access was delayed until after World War II (see, for example, Lynd & Lynd, 1937, p. 195; Pleck, 1990; see Strasser, 1982 for discussion of the later diffusion of household appliances, and the erroneous equation of invention of appliances with their widespread use by an early central source; and note 12 for further details). Folbre (1994) describes how the shift to wage labor increased the costs of dependent care while weakening family provisions for such care, leading to new social policy to provide old age and child care, in very different forms. I see these differences as tied to men's movement into labor force while women were held in home through reinforcement of the gender division of labor. While occupational segregation by gender and race limited

women's access to alternative support, policies such as protective labor legislation, Mothers' Pensions, and the family wage reinforced support for women's domestic tasks, though these measures were primarily for white women, and far from sufficient. Grants to single mothers, for example, were so meager women often had to combine them with paid work (Brooks-Higginbotham, 1989; Guy-Sheftall, 1990; Gordon, 1991, 1994; Hartmann, 1974; Ladd-Taylor, 1994; Mink, 1995).

12. While this does not count women's unpaid contribution to agricultural work, even in urban areas as late as 1950 over 60% of married women of color did not work for wages (Goldin, 1990, p. 25). Glenn points out that while feminist theory explains women's oppression in terms of patriarchal exploitation, and "internal colonialism" sees racism as utilized to reinforce the exploitation of labor at extremely low wages, "no satisfactory theory has been developed to analyze what happens when these systems of oppression intersect" (1987, p. 47). What is needed, she and others have stressed, is not a simple incremental approach, but one which grasps the intersection of these two theories in the lives of women of color.

13. At the start of World War II the majority of American households still lacked basic appliances and utilities. Only 44% of all homes (and 56% of urban homes) had electric refrigerators in 1940, less than half (42.0%) had central heating, and just over half (54.2%) used gas or electricity, rather than coal, wood or similar fuels for cooking (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970, p. 133). Little changed during the war. In the 1950s a sharp climb in utilities and basic household appliances took place. Dwelling units with hot and cold running water increased from 62% in 1950 to 92.9% in 1960, while those without central heating dropped by almost one third, to 17.7%. By 1963, 98.9% of households had refrigerators, 96.2% had gas or electric stoves, and 49.6% had automatic washing machines (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1966, Tables 1123, 1124, 1125; 1981, Tables 1383 and 1384). Increases in the use of basic household appliances in the following decades were small by comparison. In contrast to the 1920s, where access to such appliances and services differed sharply by class, mass production of consumer durables and semi-durables, extension of utilities and services throughout the country, and rising post-war incomes meant alleviation of the burdens of domestic work had become more uniform. Even among poor families, stoves and refrigerators were commonly provided in rented apartments, with washing machines increasingly available either within the building or in nearby laundromats which proliferated rapidly (Strasser, 1982). While some scholars have continued to argue industrialization did not lessen household work, close examination of household time use studies reveals a twenty-hour drop from 1925–1967 in time spent each week on essential chores of food preparation, clothing, heating and household maintenance, with employed wives spending only half as many hours as nonemployed wives on housework (Vane, 1973; Walker & Woods, 1976). "The additional time spent in homemaking by nonemployed women," Vane herself concluded, "represents 'just' keeping busy" (1973, p. 192).

14. The labor force participation of married women of color soared from 31.8% in 1950 to 50.0% in 1970 (Goldin, 1990, p. 17; Wallace, 1980). For African-American women, who made up most of this group, this shift has been obscured by emphasis upon their greater engagement in paid work than white women, and its close overlap with migration northwards of much of the African-American population. African-American wives working for pay in the 1950s expressed resentment of their husbands' expectation of their domestic labor (Giddings, 1984, p. 244–251). Greater attention is needed to differing social constructions and dismantlings of the gendered division of

labor. One such example is Alice Walker's (1981) argument against her mother's urging to have more than one child.

15. In the recession of the early 1980s, for example, median family income dropped by 14% for African-Americans and 19% for Puerto Ricans, but only 5% for whites. While men bore the brunt of shrinking opportunities in traditional manufacturing jobs, employment difficulties for some women themselves, particularly Puerto Rican women hurt by the decline of the garment industry, contributed to such problems (Tienda & Jensen, 1988). Unemployment and poverty placed strains upon marriages and increasingly discouraged such unions. Marital disruption in the 1980s, occurring across all educational and income levels, was almost twice as great among unemployed or poor white, Latino and African-American couples. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992, pp. 11-14).

16. For discussion of the underlying dynamics of industrialization, excellent review of theories of welfare state formation, and example of alternative shapings of policy at an earlier moment of industrialization, see Steinmetz (1991). For a range of theoretical approaches, see Esping-Anderson, 1990; Marshall, 1964; Shalev, 1983; Weir, Orloff & Skocpol, 1988; Wilensky, 1975.

17. Also, feminist organizations have built a wide institutional framework which, while focused on widening women's access to the labor force, has potential to gain new provisions for domestic tasks. The fact that women are only now utilizing the vote in their own interests as workers demonstrates the importance of an underlying shift to wage work to activate this resource. The shift in women's base of support from household to wage labor can also give new power to women's demands through greater worker organization against employers and the state. While unions have come to seem unfeasible, as equated with a male working class and a manufacturing sector now fleeing overseas, public school teachers realize relatively good wages compared to others in predominately female occupations due to unionization. Home health care and child care, two of the fastest growing and lowest paid occupations, must necessarily be located in the United States (currently encouraging the exploitation of immigrant labor). The shifting base of women's support also opens potential for new alliances, as most male workers now have wives in the labor force and thus their own interests in gaining family-friendly policies. The increased cost of such policies, as in Clinton's proposal unemployment benefits be used to provide paid leave for the parents of newborns, also increases potential for new alliances, as employers seek to shift such costs to the state, as occurred in earlier battles over social policy. One potential in women's turn to labor force is that of acknowledging the right of all adults to work, and to social provisions for care and adequate income, whether jobs are available or not.

18. While a growing number of women are delaying or avoiding the domestic role it altogether, most women still marry and become mothers, and most now work outside the home while raising children. Half of married mothers with children under eighteen work full-time (Bianchi & Spain, 1996, p. 21). The middle-class receives on average the poorest quality of care in day-care centers, for example, as profit-driven agencies seek very low-paid workers, and a recent Harris poll found three-quarters of Americans would support a new tax to provide public daycare (Anderson & Vail, 1999).

19. Full discussion of specific programs and steps toward their implementation is not possible within the confines of this paper. However, even the comparatively meager programs like those won by a male working class in the New Deal, shaped now around support for care giving, would bring gains to women. This point is recognized by those

seeing social insurance as offering a feasible model for framing new supports for women (Folbre, 1994, 1995; Gordon, 1995; Hartmann & Spalter-Roth, 1996). Utilizing gender resources tied to private-led development distinctive to liberal regimes, women once made policy gains in the United States, and have achieved greater equality in the labor force than in many social democracies (see Wright, 1998 for discussion of relative labor force positions of women in the United States and Scandinavia).

20. This perspective opens several questions for further research. First, in order to clearly assess and gain greater control of emerging policy patterns, we need to consider several issues in greater detail. We need to look more closely at the impact of women's economic locations upon variations in social policy, as well as the other way around. Also, we need to extend insightful assessments of women's economic dependence (Hobson, 1990; Sorensen & McLanahan, 1987) into the present decade, establishing to what degree women's livelihoods come primarily from performance of domestic tasks within marriage or from their own wages in different countries. We also need to better understand similarities and differences between older dual-role policies and current versions now furthering women's dependence upon marriage and part-time work.

21. Such pessimism has arisen in the face of the dismantling of AFDC, economic stagnation in the 1970s and early 1980s, and retrenchment of the welfare state in the United States and Europe. Sainsbury (1996), for example, sees 1980 as the peak of the mature welfare state.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the American Association of University Women for a research fellowship which provided time for work on the larger project of which this article is one piece; and participants in the Feminist Research Group at Northwestern's Institute for Policy Research and anonymous reviewers for their comments.

## REFERENCES

- Abramovitz, M. (1988, 1996). *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Anderson, T., & Vail, B. (1999). Child-Care Dilemmas in Contemporary Families. In: S. Coontz, M. Parson & G. Raley (Eds), *American Families: A Multicultural Reader* (pp. 359-370). New York: Routledge.
- Bergmann, B. (1990). *The Economic Emergence of Women*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bergmann, B., & Hartmann, H. (1995). A Welfare Reform Based on Help for Working Parents. *Feminist Economics*, 1(2)(Summer), 85-89.
- Bianchi, S. M., & Spain, D. (1996). Women, Work, and Family in America. *Population Bulletin*, 51(3)(December). Washington, D.C.: Population Reference Bureau, Inc.
- Boydston, J. (1990). *Home and Work: Housework, Wages and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Brooks-Higginbotham, E. (1989). The Problem of Race in Women's History. In: E. Weed (Ed.), *Coming to Terms: Feminism, Theory, Politics*. New York: Routledge.

- Cherlin, A. (1992). *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Cohen, M. G. (1988). *Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Cowan, R. (1974). The "Industrial Revolution" in the Home: Household Technology and Social Change in the 20th Century. *Technology and Culture*, 17, 1–24.
- Delphy, C., & Leonard, D. (1992). *Familiar Exploitation*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Dill, B. T. (1994). Fictive Kin, Paper Sons, and Compadrazgo: Women of Color and the Struggle for Family Survival. In: M. B. Zinn & B. T. Dill (Eds), *Women of Color in U.S. Society* (pp. 149–169). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Ehrenreich, B. (1984). *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press.
- Esping-Anderson, G. (1990). *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Folbre, N. (1991). The Unproductive Housewife: Her Evolution in Nineteenth Century Economic Thought. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 16(3), 463–484.
- Folbre, N. (1994). *Who Pays for the Kids? Gender and the Structures of Constraint*. New York: Routledge.
- Folbre, N. (1995). Barbara, the Market, and the State. *Feminist Economics*, (Summer)(1/2), 159–168.
- Fraser, N. (1994). After the Family Wage: Gender Equity and the Welfare State. *Political Theory*, 22, 591–618.
- Freeman, J. (1990). From Protection to Equal Opportunity: The Revolution in Women's Legal Status. In: L. A. Tilly & P. Gurin (Eds), *Women, Politics and Change* (pp. 457–481). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Friedan, B. (1981). *The Second Stage*. New York: Summit Books.
- Giddings, P. (1984). *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Glenn, E. N. (1987). Racial Ethnic Women's Labor: The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Class Oppression. In: C. Bose, R. Feldberg & N. Sokoloff (Eds), *Hidden Aspects of Women's Work*. New York: Praeger; Jones.
- Goldin, C. (1990). *Understanding the Gender Gap*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gordon, L. (Ed.) (1990). *Women, the State, and Welfare*. Madison, Wisc: Univ. of Wisconsin Press.
- Gordon, L. (1993). Gender, State and Society: A Debate with Theda Skocpol. *Contention*, 2(3)(Spring), 139–157.
- Gordon, L. (1994). *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare*. Madison, Wisc: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Gordon, L. (1995). Thoughts on the Help for Working Parents Plan. *Feminist Economics*, 1(2)(Summer), 91–94.
- Guy-Sheftall, B. (1990). *Daughters of Sorrow: Attitudes Toward Black Women, 1880–1920*. Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing.
- Hartmann, H. (1974). Capitalism and Women's Work in the Home, 1900–1930. Ph.D. diss. Yale University, New Haven.
- Hartmann, H. (1979). Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex. In: Z. Eisenstein (Ed.), *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* (pp. 206–247). New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Hartmann, H. (1987). Changes in Women's Economic and Family Roles in Post-World War II United States. In: C. R. Stimpson & L. Beneria (Eds), *Women, Households and the Economy* (pp. 33–64). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Hartmann, H., & Spalter-Roth, R. (1996). A Feminist Approach to Public Policy Making for Women and Families. *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, 16, 33–51.



- Hobson, B. (1990). No Exit, No Voice: Women's Economic Dependency and the Welfare State. *Acta Sociologica*, 33(3), 235–250.
- Hobson, B. (1994). Solo Mothers, Policy Regimes, and the Logics of Gender. In: D. Sainsbury (Ed.), *Gendering Welfare States* (pp. 170–187). London: Sage.
- Jacob, H. (1988). *Silent Revolution: The Transformation of Divorce Law in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jenson, J. (1997). Who Cares? Gender and Welfare Regimes. *Social Politics*, (Summer), 182–187.
- Jenson, J., & Mahon, R. (1993). Representing Solidarity: Class, Gender and the Crisis in Social-Democratic Sweden. *New Left Review*, 201, 76–100.
- Jones, J. (1987). *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kessler-Harris, A. (1990). *A Woman's Wage: Historical Meanings and Social Consequences*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky.
- Kittay, E. F. (1998). Dependency, Equality and Welfare. *Feminist Studies*, 24(1)(Spring), 32–43.
- Koven, S., & Michel, S. (1993). *Editors, Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*. New York: Routledge.
- Ladd-Taylor, M. (1994). *Mother-Work: Women, Child-Welfare and the State, 1890–1930*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Lewis, J. (1995). Gender and the Development of Welfare Regimes. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 3, 159–173.
- Lewis, J. (1997). Gender and Welfare Regimes: Further Thoughts. *Social Politics*, (Summer), 160–177.
- Lynd, R., & Lynd, H. (1937). *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.
- Luker, K. (1984). *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- McAdam, D. (1982). *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency: 1930–1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mansbridge, J. (1986). *Why We Lost the ERA*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Manza, J., & Brooks, C. (1999). *Social Cleavages and Political Change: Voter Alignments and U.S. Party Coalitions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Marshall, T. H. (1964). *Class, Citizenship and Social Development*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.
- Michel, S. (1999). *Children's Interests/Mothers' Rights*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Mink, G. (1995a). *The Wages of Motherhood*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Mink, G. (1995b). Wage Work, Family Work, and Welfare Politics. *Feminist Economics*, 1(2)(Summer), 95–98.
- Mink, G. (1998a). *Welfare's End*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Mink, G. (1998b). The Lady and The Tramp (II): Feminist Welfare Politics, Poor Single Mothers, and the Challenge of Welfare Justice. *Feminist Studies*, 24(1)(Spring), 55–64.
- O'Connor, J., Orloff, A., & Shaver, S. (1999). *States, Markets and Families*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pederson, S. (1993). *Family, Dependence, and the Origins of the Welfare State*. New York, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Pleck, E. (1990). The Two-Parent Household: Black Family Structure in Late Nineteenth Century Boston. In: D. Hines (Ed.), *Black Women in United States History from Colonial Times through the Nineteenth Century* (Vol. 3, pp. 335–363). Brooklyn, New York: Carlson.
- Quadagno, J. (1984). Welfare Capitalism and the Social Security Act of 1935. *American Sociological Review*, 49, 632–647.

- Quadagno, J. (1998). *American Journal of Sociology*, 105(5)(March), 1459–1460.
- Roberts, D. E. (1995). Race, Gender, and the Value of Mothers' Work. *Social Politics*, (Summer), 195–207.
- Rubin, L. (1979). *Women of a Certain Age: The Mid-life Search for Self*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Sainsbury, D. (1996). *Gender, Equality and Welfare States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shalev, M. (1983). The Social Democratic Model and Beyond: Two Generations of Comparative Research on the Welfare State. *Comparative Social Research*, 6, 315–351.
- Shank, S. (1988). Women and the Labor Market: the Link Grows Stronger. *U.S. Monthly Labor Review*, (March), 3–8.
- Schreiner, O. (1978[1911]). *Woman and Labour*. London: Virago.
- Skocpol, T. (1992). *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Smith, J., & Ward, M. (1984). *Women's Wages and Work in the Twentieth Century*. Santa Monica, Ca: Rand Corporation.
- Sorensen, A., & McLanahan, S. (1987). Married Women's Economic Dependency, 1940–1980. *American Journal of Sociology*, 93(3)(November), 659–687.
- Spalter-Roth, R. M., & Hartmann, H. I. (1994). AFDC Recipients as Care-givers and Workers: A Feminist Approach to Income Security Policy for American Women. *Social Politics*, (Summer), 190–210.
- Steinmetz, G. (1991). The Local Welfare State: Two Strategies for Social Domination in Urban Imperial Germany. *American Sociological Review*, 55(December), 891–911.
- Strasser, S. (1982). *Never Done: A History of American Housework*. New York: Pantheon.
- Tienda, M., & Jensen, L. (1988). Poverty and Minorities: A Quarter-Century Profile of Color and Socioeconomic Disadvantage. In: G. Sandefur & M. Tienda (Eds), *Divided Opportunities: Minorities, Poverty and Social Policy* (pp. 23–61). New York: Plenum Press.
- Tolnay, S. (1984). Black Family Formation and Tenancy in the Farm South, 1900. *American Journal of Sociology*, 90(2), 305–325.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census (1966). Statistical Abstract of the United States (87th edition), Tables 1123, 1124, 1125; and 1981 (102nd edition), Tables 1383 & 1384. Series D 42–48. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census (1970). Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970 Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census (1982). Studies in Household and Family Formation, Current Population Reports, Series P23–179. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Vanek, J. (1973). Keeping Busy: Time Spent in Housework, United States, 1920–1970. Ph.D. Diss., University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- Wallace, P., with Datcher, L., & Malveaux, J. (1980). *Black Women in the Labor Force*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Walker, K. E., & Woods, M. E. (1976). *Time Use: A Measure of Household Production of Family Goods and Services*. Washington, D.C.: American Home Economics Association.
- Walker, A. (1981). One Child of One's Own: A Meaningful Digression within the Work(s). In: J. Sternburg (Ed.), *The Writer on Her Work* (pp. 121–140). New York: W. W. Norton and Company.
- Weir, M., Orloff, A. S., & Skocpol, T. (Eds) (1988). *The Politics of Social Policy Formation in the United States*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Wilensky, H. (1975). *The Welfare State and Equality: Structural and Ideological Roots of Public Expenditure*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- Williams, F. (1995). Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in Welfare States: A Framework for Comparative Analysis. *Social Politics*, 127–159.

- Wilson, W. J. (1987). *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Women's Bureau (1998). *Equal Pay: A Thirty-Five Year Perspective*. U.S. Department of Labor. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Wright, E. O. (1998). *Class Counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

# ABOLITIONISM AND SOCIAL THEORY: SLAVERY, “WAGE-SLAVERY,” AND THE VISIBILITY OF OPPRESSION

David Norman Smith

## INTRODUCTION

Milestones in history are perennially controversial. Wars inspire warring theories, revolutions are continuously reinterpreted, and cultural changes are routinely reconceived in the light of later cultural mutations. This truth has been doubly plain in the past generation, as many historians and sociologists have sought to merge the strengths of their two disciplines. Jointly historical and theoretical perspectives have been advanced on many topics, under several rubrics (including, e.g. “social history,” “social science history,” and “historical sociology”). Lately, though, the perils and uncertainties of this interdisciplinary enterprise have evoked a measure of skepticism even among some of its most dedicated defenders. Thus far, we are told, the encounter between theory and history has been “the mutual enlightenment that never happened”<sup>1</sup> – and future efforts may be equally unavailing.

Many historians, of course, have been averse to “theory” from the start, and the meteoric rise of postmodern, post-structuralist and neo-pragmatist trends has undoubtedly reinforced this aversion. In many circles, “Theory with a capital T” is an object of derision and hostility,<sup>2</sup> and, for some, the social sciences are

---

**Bringing Capitalism Back for Critique by Social Theory, Volume 21, pages 143–181.**  
Copyright © 2002 by Elsevier Science Ltd.  
All rights of reproduction in any form reserved.  
ISBN: 0-7623-0762-5

suspect *per se*. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that some sociologists have begun to express an equal and opposite aversion to “historicism” and “Grand Historical Sociology.” These are the pivotal terms used, for example, in articles by John Goldthorpe and by Edgar Kiser and Michael Hechter in their efforts to classify what they see as a futile effort to ground theory in history.<sup>3</sup> These authors *oppose* the rapprochement of sociology and history. They say sociology is injured by its alliance with history, and that wars, civil wars and other momentous historical events can be properly explained only by sociologists who *resist* the temptations of historiography. Theory, they say, is the province of science, not history.

These claims merit consideration. I will contend, in what follows, that Goldthorpe, Kiser and Hechter are gravely mistaken about the nature of the Theory/History nexus. I will then explore a major substantive issue of interest to historians and sociologists alike, the antislavery ethic in the antebellum United States.<sup>4</sup> A close look at current debates on this subject shows just how vital the dialogue between historians and theorists remains. And I will seek to show that even the much maligned “classics” of social theory still have a remarkable degree of unrealized explanatory power.

## THE FLIGHT FROM HISTORY

Although very different in style and emphasis, the articles by Goldthorpe and Kiser and Hechter are remarkably similar in content. Appearing a month apart in the flagship journals of British and American sociology, both articles call for a return to generalizing, scientific, “nomothetic” sociology – in sharp contrast to the historical sociology then in vogue.<sup>5</sup> Goldthorpe counsels sociologists not to “readily and unthinkingly turn to history,” while Kiser and Hechter express regret that so many sociologists have, in fact, embraced an outlook that is, they say, “more historical than sociological.” This outlook, which Kiser and Hechter call “historicist,” is “the most radical departure from the methodology of mainstream sociology” – a “radical rejection” of the search for general social laws, inspired, they say, by Max Weber’s notion of interpretive inquiry into the motives of social actors.<sup>6</sup> Goldthorpe calls the same mode of inquiry “grand historical sociology,” “a whole *genre* of sociology which is in fact *dependent upon history in its very conception*.”<sup>7</sup> Not only neo-Weberians, but so-called *marxisant* scholars are faulted for their “overemphasis on descriptive [historical] accuracy,” which, Kiser and Hechter say, reduces “the analytic power” of social scientific theories.<sup>8</sup>

This “overemphasis” on history is fatal, Goldthorpe says, because history is hopelessly obscure: “. . . I would doubt,” he writes, “that even if there were a

valid 'social change explanation' of the English Civil War, adequate [data] could be found to allow its validity to be demonstrated."<sup>9</sup> Though Kiser and Hechter nurse hopes for a "general theory," they agree that this theory cannot be grounded in historical detail or nuance. "When data are fragmentary and hard to come by – as often is the case in comparative-historical research – only a theory with high analytic power, and thus low data input requirements, can be tested."<sup>10</sup> This statement, which Goldthorpe quotes approvingly in his reply to critics, has very revealing implications.<sup>11</sup> Kiser and Hechter accept the defeatist view that history is all but unknowable. We can aspire to little more than scarce, fragmentary data, they say. This, indeed, is precisely why we need a theory of "high analytic power." Only such a theory – so powerful that it converts even "low data input" into a harvest of insight – can illumine the otherwise enigmatic past.

This amounts to the claim that, since historians offer only meager scraps of unreliable data, sociologists must compensate by elaborating theories of true "power" and "generality."<sup>12</sup>

The pathos and methodological utopianism of this rhetoric become plain when we investigate what Kiser and Hechter offer us concretely. To finesse the very serious problems that scholars face when they seek to gather and analyze subjective data, Kiser and Hechter offer the simplifying assumption that people are "purposeful" actors who pursue "self-interested" goals.<sup>13</sup> In other words, rather than struggling to wrest meaning from the "low data input" of history, Kiser and Hechter offer a labor-saving alternative – a simple *axiom* of self-interested rational action. Problems of evidence and interpretation that preoccupy empirical researchers Kiser and Hechter simply bypass. They decide to *presume* exactly what historians and sociologists usually seek to *explain*. And they fully grasp the sacrifice they ask us to make: "The cost of making any general *à priori* assumptions about the interests of actors is some loss of descriptive accuracy . . ." – but this, they stoically declare, is simply ". . . the price that must be paid for a testable general theory."<sup>14</sup>

Too costly, Kiser and Hechter say, is the historicist wish to explain social action in terms of *both* "material interests [and] normative/cultural specifications of interests . . ."<sup>15</sup> Explanation of this type requires theory grounded in history, and this, they say, is simply not viable. In a similar spirit Goldthorpe waxes ironic about the prospect of using grounded theory to adjudicate between opposing interpretations of signal historical events: "just what is this theory . . . which is called upon to do such crucial work?" Can advocates of grounded theory give "even a single illustration" of its merits?<sup>16</sup>

As it happens, one of the liveliest and most sophisticated debates among contemporary social historians concerns an issue of just this kind. The issue is

the extent to which abolitionism was fired by the “material” self-interest of antislavery crusaders, or whether, in fact, “moral” concerns played an equal or greater role. The axiomatic position favored by Kiser and Hechter was once upheld under the banner of “the Williams Thesis” (the contention by Eric Williams that abolitionists opposed slavery as an expression of simple self-interest), but most historians and sociologists now endorse a position midway between the polar extremes on this question. The issue, from their vantage point, is not so much *whether* material and moral motives coincided in abolitionism, but how *in fact* they coincided. What, briefly, is the link between the antislavery ethic and the spirit of capitalism? Simple “descriptive accuracy” requires an effort to explain both sides of the equation. With this in mind, social historians are increasingly turning to grounded theories drawn, above all, from the sociological heritage of Marx and Weber. It is precisely this kind of inquiry that Goldthorpe et al. would preclude – ironically enough, in the name of “theory” and “sociology”!<sup>17</sup>

I contend, on the contrary, that David Brion Davis, John Ashworth, and other historians of abolitionism are very much on the right track in their turn to theory, and that further progress is likely to be attained, not by abandoning Weber, Marx and their successors, but by delving still further into classical and post-classical social theory.

### **FAITH MOVES MOUNTAINS, BUT MONEY MAKES THE WORLD GO 'ROUND**

The seminal fact about abolitionism that sparks continuing controversy is that, in eighteenth-century Britain and America, the antislavery movement was in large measure the brainchild and handiwork of rich Quaker capitalists. Ever since this fact was first noted, social historians have tended to oscillate between two interpretive poles. Some, such as Frank Klingberg and Sir Reginald Coupland, have stressed the moral purity and disinterested humanitarianism of the early antislavery leaders; others, like Eric Williams, have argued that evangelical abolitionism was a moral veil for the self-interest of avaricious capitalists who wished to see “the Slave Power” in ruins.<sup>18</sup>

In recent decades a concerted effort has been made to find a middle path between these two extremes. It has been widely accepted that neither Quaker scruples nor capitalist interests can be disregarded by scholars who seek to understand this complex, problematic movement in a balanced fashion. Just how this balance is to be achieved remains a disputed matter, however. This is shown, for example, by an important debate in *The American Historical Review* which has been reprinted by the University of California Press under

the title *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation*.<sup>19</sup>

The epicenter of this dispute is a clash of opinions between David Brion Davis, the leading representative of the synthesizing tendency among antislavery historians, and critic Thomas Haskell, who seeks to go “one step further.” The terms of this debate were set by Davis in his seminal inquiry into *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (1975), which Haskell subjected to critical scrutiny in a two-part essay (“Capitalism and Humanitarianism”) that appeared a decade later. A pair of rejoinders from Davis and the gifted British Americanist John Ashworth prompted a long reply from Haskell, who has now been answered once again by both Davis and Ashworth.<sup>20</sup>

“There is no more sophisticated conversation among historians on this cluster of issues,” says Thomas Bender, the editor of *The Antislavery Debate*, “and we are collectively indebted to David Brion Davis, Thomas L. Haskell, and John Ashworth.”<sup>21</sup> Like many others, Bender pays homage to the subtlety and force of Davis’s argument, which Thomas Haskell, in a generous moment, calls a “towering achievement.”<sup>22</sup> Yet Bender finds considerable merit in Haskell’s alternative outlook as well. The crux of the difference between Davis and Haskell is said to be theoretical in nature. “One cannot fail to notice, even *en passant*,” Bender remarks, “that in important respects this debate reinscribes the classical debate between social commentators working within or even in the penumbra of the Marxist tradition (especially Ashworth, but Davis too, at least on the specific issue at hand) and the Weberian tradition of social theory (Haskell, rather explicitly).”<sup>23</sup>

While Davis is credited with taking a decisive first step away from the simplistic work of “the Progressive historians [and] the Marxists of the 1940s, both of whom in varying degrees understood ideas as mere reflections of material interests,” Haskell’s work is said to represent “an even more radical shift in historical analysis of the relationship between social and cultural phenomena . . .”<sup>24</sup> Davis is alleged, on this question at least, to fall within “the penumbra” of classical Marxism, while Haskell is praised for writing “a theoretical and conceptual history, a history not too far from the historical sociology of Max Weber, whose substantive leads Haskell pursues here.”<sup>25</sup>

Even though Bender concedes that Davis takes Quakerism seriously as a religious spur to worldly action, he nevertheless detects a Marxian tilt in Davis’s characterization of early English Quaker antislavery campaigners as “the very embodiment of the capitalist mentality.”<sup>26</sup> Haskell, meanwhile, is said to “enrich the historian’s craft” by calling attention to “a novel cognitive style . . . associated with capitalism in concert with religious sources. What Haskell offers, . . . and it is a very exciting new prospect, is an extension of the Weberian project, a cultural history of capitalism.”<sup>27</sup>



Is this conclusion valid? I think not. Bender, to be sure, is very impressed with Haskell's theoretical acumen ("Such ease with philosophical argument and theory is rare in historiographical discourse, especially among Americanists"<sup>28</sup>), and even Ashworth, whose comments are mainly critical, pays tribute to "the rigor of the theoretical analysis [that] makes his article a landmark in the historiography of antislavery."<sup>29</sup> Upon inspection, however, Haskell's views prove to be far less theoretically acute than Bender imagines. Though he repeatedly invokes Weber, he seems to understand him only slightly. And while he routinely generalizes about "Marxism," he appears to have little if any direct knowledge of Marx's actual writings.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, many important errors and lacunae in Haskell's essays – which Ashworth and Davis readily detect – could have been avoided if Haskell had better grasped Marx and Weber. Haskell, like Davis and Ashworth, is very much a "historicist" in Kiser and Hechter's sense, but he is not as sophisticated about the theoretical antecedents and implications of historicism as he intimates.<sup>31</sup>

In my opinion, Marx and Weber are sources of enduring insight into the moral, conceptual and social roots of the antislavery movement – not as embalmed canonical figures, but as living voices whose contributions remain to be fully appreciated and appropriated. No one yet has made a richer, subtler or more sustained inquiry into the moral and historical dynamic of capitalist society. It is hence neither coincidental nor anachronistic for contemporary historians to invoke the traditions associated with their names in the effort to decipher the clash between systems of "free" and slave labor.

In what follows, after exploring the logic of the antislavery debate, I will defend the thesis that Marx's *Capital* allows us to shine a beam of light on this debate; as Moishe Postone has argued, Marx's theory in *Capital* "is also a social theory of consciousness" – a theory, in fact, of precisely the kind that Davis and Haskell call for.<sup>32</sup> In a companion essay I will advance a similar argument about Weber's Protestant Ethic thesis. And I will show that it is the singular merit of David Brion Davis to approximate (and, in some cases, supersede) the insights of Marx and Weber alike.

## THE ANTISLAVERY DEBATE

Counterposing Marx, the "reductionist," to the anti-reductionist Weber, Haskell is more than happy to put Davis in Marx's shade while claiming Weber's mantle for himself. He opens with a few generous caveats: "Certainly, much of the alternative approach that I wish to recommend is implicit in Davis's analysis. He never denied the authenticity of the reformers' good intentions and

never claimed that their 'actual' aim was to achieve social control."<sup>33</sup> Haskell acknowledges that Davis does try "... to avoid making class interest the exclusive or overpowering link between substructural and superstructural change."<sup>34</sup> Yet he insists that Davis does not ultimately transcend reductionist tendencies: "... even after all of his many qualifications are taken into account, class interest is the only link between base and superstructure that he specifically recognized."<sup>35</sup>

This, Haskell says, reveals an ulterior assumption, namely, that "class interest is the medium – and presumably the *only* important medium – through which substructural change influences developments in the superstructure."<sup>36</sup> While Davis unquestionably offers "a very refined application of the thesis," there should be no doubt about the character of this thesis itself: "... the historian employing the social control schema is strongly predisposed to look to class interest alone for the connecting link between capitalism and humanitarianism, base and superstructure."<sup>37</sup>

The position which Haskell ascribes to Davis is that the abolitionists were moved to act by class interest – that, by opposing slavery in the name of free enterprise, they were unconsciously actuated by the profit motive.<sup>38</sup> Quaker morality, in the end, was a veil for bourgeois self-interest, not an autonomous ethical force. And this, Haskell insinuates, is at best a veiled Marxism. In several places he pounces on Davis's use of the Gramscian concept of hegemony, which denotes class rule grounded in the consent of the governed. This concept, Haskell says, has conventionally served as a kind of intellectual "feather pillow, perfect for catching falling Marxists." The significance of this metaphor is clear: "In logic, if not in fact, [the] principal appeal [of Gramsci's idea of hegemony] ought to be to people who once construed the relation between consciousness and society in classic Marxian terms ... but who have come to regard the classic formulation as excessively reductionist and need an alternative that does not carry them beyond the Marxian pale altogether."<sup>39</sup>

While Haskell does not call Davis a historical materialist in so many words, the implication is plain. Evidently, like Aileen Kraditor, Eugene Genovese, E. P. Thompson and others, Davis relies on a kind of "Gramscian alchemy" to transmute Marxian orthodoxy into a more refined and yet still recognizably Marxian vision.<sup>40</sup>

Haskell, meanwhile, drapes himself in Weberian colors. In his opening statement of purpose, he explains his opposition to Davis by arguing that the concept of class interest, narrowly deployed, "has obscured almost as much as it has revealed."<sup>41</sup> His own "alternative conception" rests on the view that interests influence belief "through what Weber called 'elective affinity',"<sup>42</sup> and he quickly adds a pledge of Weberian allegiance: "Weber's treatment of the

relationship between ideas and interest in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* seems to me the best model we have.”<sup>43</sup> Later, in reply to Ashworth, Haskell again avows the paradigmatic nature of the difference between Marx and Weber. One of the better features of Ashworth’s argument, he says, “bears comparison to the approach that Weber developed most fully in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.”<sup>44</sup> Soon afterwards, however, “Ashworth parts company with both Weber and me,” taking a “very un-Weberian” position which, not surprisingly, has Marxist overtones.<sup>45</sup> The lines here are clearly drawn: Marx and Gramsci are arrayed on one side of the spectrum, with Weber on the other side. Davis, like Genovese and Kraditor, is said to veer to the Marxist side, while Haskell takes shelter under Weber’s wing.

However elegant in its simplicity, this argument is a clear falsification of the truth. As Davis rightly protests, Haskell’s account of his views is largely a caricature. “Haskell knew that I am not a Marxist and that my book tends ‘to play down class interest (even while finally embracing it).’ That meant, however, that if Haskell could discredit what he called ‘the most penetrating and sophisticated example’ of ‘the social control interpretation’ – the view that class interest was the only or major link connecting ‘the rise of capitalism’ with humanitarian reform – then he would also have demolished all the Marxian and fellow-traveler accounts that purport to show ‘how supposedly disinterested reforms actually functioned to advance bourgeois interests.’ Haskell clearly believed that such accounts had gained immense and unwarranted popularity; his attack on me, if initially prefaced with words of respect and praise, soon revealed the colors of a true believer’s war.”<sup>46</sup>

Far from reducing culture to class interest, Davis accords great weight to religion as an independent force; yet, he notes, Haskell “wholly ignores my continuing emphasis on religious issues, religious meanings, and religious motivations.”<sup>47</sup> Seemingly eager to force Davis into the Procrustean bed of economic determinism, Haskell credits Davis with a host of stereotyped “Marxian” views; indeed, Davis concludes, “his continual misunderstanding of my position is the direct result of his attempt to impose on my work his own simplistic framework of ‘base and superstructure’.”<sup>48</sup> Haskell shows almost no interest in the data presented in *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, and remains, Davis observes, almost wholly “aloof from the loamy soil of historical narrative – the specific people, groups, actions, dates, movements, and contexts to which I refer in both my book and *AHR* reply . . .”<sup>49</sup>

What, then, does David Brion Davis really say, and in what sense is Thomas Haskell’s perspective an “alternative”?

## THE GREAT DIVIDE: INTEREST AND IDEALISM

Like many earlier historians, Davis emphasizes the fact that antislavery sentiment was remarkably rare prior to the age of revolutions in the late eighteenth century. Explaining the change in moral sentiments which began to occur in this period is, Davis says, the central goal of his inquiry into early abolitionism. "In the 1760s there was nothing unprecedented about chattel slavery . . . . What was unprecedented by the 1760s and early 1770s was the emergence of a widespread conviction that New World slavery symbolized all the forces that threatened the true destiny of man. How does one explain this remarkable shift in moral consciousness?"<sup>50</sup>

Davis characterizes this shift in memorable language. "The emergence of an international antislavery opinion," he says, "represented a momentous turning point in the evolution of man's moral perception."<sup>51</sup> A metamorphosis in the way "Western culture . . . organized man's experience with lordship and bondage" was underway. Ancient moral standards had begun to mutate.

To explore the new modes of sensibility which arose in this period, Davis occupies himself not with "immediate causation but rather with the conditions which weakened the traditional screening mechanisms of Western culture; which removed slavery from the list of supposedly inevitable misfortunes of life; and which made it easier to perceive – in a moral sense – the inherent contradictions of human bondage."<sup>52</sup>

In Weberian terms, we can say that a new economic ethic was on the horizon. A new moral sensibility was crystallizing, contrary, in essential respects, to every sensibility which had preceded it. Established codes of conduct that had sanctioned chattel slavery were now beginning to turn into their opposites.

At the heart of this new development was an ethical shift among Quakers in both England and America. Davis emphasizes that Quakers had not held antislavery views to any very appreciable extent in previous periods. The large majority of Quakers, in fact, had held utterly conventional views on slavery, and few had objected to the extensive involvement of Quaker merchants in the slave trade.<sup>53</sup> Now, however, Quaker opinions began to change. The effects of this change were seismic. "It would be difficult," Davis concludes, "to exaggerate the central role Quakers played in initiating and sustaining the first antislavery movements."<sup>54</sup> Much of the most creative research reported in *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* confirms this point. In the records of the earliest antislavery societies in Philadelphia, New York, and elsewhere, Davis unearthed abundant evidence to justify the conviction of contemporaries that Quakers were the leading lights of this nascent movement. "Except in

Connecticut and Kentucky, Quakers were the chief organizers and most active supporters of the early American antislavery societies. In the North Carolina movement the proportion of Quakers ran as high as 80%.<sup>55</sup>

Quakers were no less prominent in the English movement, which was, to a certain extent, coordinated with the American movement, thanks to the Quakers' trans-Atlantic communications network.<sup>56</sup> In London, for example, the Quakers meticulously monitored Parliamentary legislation and routinely distributed antislavery propaganda to both Houses of Parliament.<sup>57</sup> Nor can there be any doubt, Davis adds, "that the Quakers' dissemination of antislavery literature had tremendous impact; by 1787 the slave trade had become a lively issue for a considerable segment of the English reading public, and an audience had been prepared for the 51,432 copies of books and pamphlets and the 26,526 briefer reports that the Abolition Committee would print by mid-July 1788."<sup>58</sup>

The Quakers in this period were exceptional, however, not only for their antislavery activism, but for their sheer wealth. This, Davis feels, has been a relatively neglected feature of eighteenth-century Quaker identity. "Few accounts of early Quaker abolitionists give any indication of their most conspicuous characteristic, which was, quite simply, their incredible economic success. Although it is generally acknowledged that Quakers epitomized the 'Protestant ethic,' the central role they played in eighteenth-century commerce, banking, and industry is seldom appreciated."<sup>59</sup> English Quakers, for example, were leading manufacturers of clocks, instruments, drugs, porcelain, and china; they played a vital role in the British mining industry, and they founded "two of the world's greatest banks" (Lloyd's and Barclay's). It is at this point that Davis reaches the conclusion that Haskell finds so telling: "The very embodiment of the capitalist mentality, the English Quakers were in the vanguard of the industrial revolution."<sup>60</sup>

The Quakers enjoyed a similar status in America and in the early American abolition societies. From a sample of forty-nine of the most active New York abolitionists, "at least twenty-three were merchants and shipowners; eight were bankers, including several bank presidents and directors; eight were lawyers and judges," and the rest were ministers, doctors, and professors, "along with a scattered assortment of canal promoters, land speculators, and the owners of drug firms, dry-goods stores, sawmills, and boardinghouses."<sup>61</sup> Elsewhere, with the partial exception of Philadelphia, the early abolition societies were equally "narrow and affluent" in their social composition.<sup>62</sup> In general, "like their English brethren, the American Quaker abolitionists were distinguished by their mercantile wealth and above all by their entrepreneurial leadership."<sup>63</sup>

It would be easy to interpret this data in a narrowly economic spirit. Writers who uphold “the Williams Thesis” could argue that Quaker morality was a fig leaf for self-interest, and that the early abolitionists were moved less by the Protestant ethic than by the spirit of capitalism. The early socialist historian Herman Schlüter defends a position of this kind when he speaks, for example, of “the hypocrisy which was really back of the whole middle-class movement in behalf of the emancipation of the slaves.”<sup>64</sup> But Davis is wholly cognizant of the synergy between Puritanism and capitalism which Weber labored to analyze. In *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, he expressly notes that moralizing critics, allergic to any mention of the abolitionists’ class status, are likely to “raise the bugaboo of ‘economic interpretation’ and the specter of Eric Williams” whenever themes of class or interest enter the picture.<sup>65</sup> To preclude this misreading of his own intentions, Davis warmly endorses Roger Anstey’s critique of Williams, which, he says, shows “the inadequacy of a naïve determinism and of too literal a conception of ‘self-interest’.”<sup>66</sup> Davis spurns the idea that “antislavery activities were a hypocritical effort to divert attention from the sufferings of English workingmen,”<sup>67</sup> while stressing that eighteenth-century Quaker moral revivalism sprang, in no small part, from a “quietistic yearning for self-effacement.”<sup>68</sup> He repudiates the “simplistic thesis that Quaker abolitionists were governed by ‘economic interest’ in the sense that they stood to profit from the destruction of the slave trade or a weakening of the plantation system.”<sup>69</sup> But he refuses to go to the opposite extreme and simply deny the effective role of class interest. The challenge here is not to pretend that interest is irrelevant – as Haskell very nearly does, despite his claims to the contrary – but to find a way to *balance* explanations based on awareness of “ideal” and “material” motives.<sup>70</sup> This is what Davis seeks in his account of the influence of Quakerism on early abolitionism: “The new hostility to human bondage cannot be reduced simply to the needs and interests of particular classes. Yet the needs and interests of particular classes had much to do with a given society’s receptivity to new ideas and thus to the ideas’ historical impact.”<sup>71</sup>

This eminently reasonable statement is followed by a complex analysis. Leaving aside lesser streams of argument, we can say that Davis focuses mainly on the analysis of a single fact – namely, that “Quakers engaged in the antislavery cause were also deeply concerned over domestic problems of labor discipline.”<sup>72</sup> The Quaker abolitionists were profoundly convinced not only that slave labor was execrable, but that the ascending system of “free labor” was infinitely morally superior. Antagonism to slavery and support for wage labor were not separable, in fact, but were two sides of the same coin, indivisibly united in the moral imagination of the antislavery

campaigners. *Slave labor was evil because it was unfree; wage labor was noble, in no small part, because it was not enslaved.* Thus reasoned the Quaker moralists who fought slavery and touted free enterprise in the late eighteenth century.

People can differ, of course, over the extent to which “free labor” is truly free. Disagreements on this question are as old as free labor itself, and in the nineteenth century it became increasingly common to hear working-class radicals and pro-slavery apologists indict wage labor as “wage slavery.” By popularizing this term they hoped to convey a sense of the crushing constraints placed on formally free workers in a system that offers no guaranteed employment, food, or shelter, and precious few alternatives to taxing menial labor under the thumb of an employer who decides what to produce, under what conditions, and by what means. For critics of capitalism, this is not freedom but a travesty of freedom – and many of today’s historians see the force of this argument.<sup>73</sup>

For eighteenth-century Quaker abolitionists, however, free labor and slavery appeared to be moral and logical opposites, absolutely counterposed. They simply could see no analogy between slaves and “wage slaves” – so that, when early critics like the aristocratic Gilbert Francklyn ironically warned them of the dangers of “anarchy, confusion, and bloodshed” that might follow “too nice and critical an inquiry into the exact portion of each man’s particular liberty [that] society . . . may have a right to deprive him of”<sup>74</sup> – they were profoundly unmoved.

Davis argues that, for the Quaker abolitionists, it was literally “unthinkable that an attack on a specific system of labor and domination might also validate other forms of oppression . . .”<sup>75</sup> For the lordly David Barclay, for example, “it was inconceivable that English servants were in any sense unfree”;<sup>76</sup> and for the great merchant and manufacturer William Dillwyn, whom Thomas Clarkson called the leader of British abolitionism, “the children in the English mines and factories were the beneficiaries of wholesome discipline . . .”<sup>77</sup>

The central tenet of the “free labor” doctrine in this period was that wage labor, freely chosen, is an exemplary and irreplaceable form of moral education. Workers, forced to confront the realities of the factory and the labor market, will either learn thrift, diligence and discipline or fall by the wayside. And no gentler suasion can be expected to work, since workers are refractory and feckless by nature. They must be forced (not, of course, *coerced*, but compelled by economic necessity) to master their brute impulses and internalize a genuine devotion to their work. Otherwise, they will remain unruly or, like slaves, respond to the whip solely for external reasons, without the redeeming grace of conscientious *dedication*.<sup>78</sup>

It is “a significant fact,” Davis says, that the flood of literature which promoted this work ethic appeared during the early years of the antislavery crusade – and it is equally notable that the “chief figures” in this new school of thought “were all outspoken opponents of Negro slavery . . .”<sup>79</sup> Malthus, for example, argued that “only the threat of starvation would teach the poor to depend on themselves.”<sup>80</sup> Burke and many others echoed this view, which was given a revealing twist by the Reverend Joseph Townsend, whose *Dissertation on the Poor Laws* drew a sharp contrast between the ascetic lessons inculcated by wage labor and the indolence bred by slavery.

“The poor,” Townsend wrote, “know little of the motives which stimulate the higher ranks to action – pride, honour, and ambition. In general it is only hunger which can spur and goad them on to labour . . . The laws, it must be confessed, have likewise said that they shall be compelled to work. But . . . legal constraint is attended with too much trouble, violence, and noise; creates ill will, and never can be productive of good and acceptable service: whereas hunger is not only a peaceable, silent, unremitted pressure, but, as the most natural motive to industry and labour, it calls forth the most powerful exertions.” He concluded: “The slave must be compelled to work; but the freeman should be left to his own judgement and discretion . . . By recurring to those base motives which influence the slave, and trusting only to compulsion, all the benefits of free service, both to the servant and the master, must be lost.”<sup>81</sup>

Is Townsend a cynic? Were the abolitionists who shared his views hypocrites – erstwhile “enemies of slavery” who nevertheless defended the moral equivalent of slavery? Schlüter and others have certainly thought so. Davis disagrees. He recognizes, to be sure, that the antislavery movement offered “a highly selective response to labor exploitation. It provided an outlet for demonstrating a Christian concern for human suffering and injustice, and yet thereby gave a certain moral insulation to economic activities less visibly dependent on human suffering and injustice.”<sup>82</sup> And it is plainly true that the early abolitionists were as friendly to wage labor as they were hostile to slavery – and in fact, much “early British antislavery writing reveals an almost obsessive concern with idealized hierarchical order.”<sup>83</sup> But this was conviction, not cynicism. The bourgeois *sensibilities* of the early abolitionists were plainly on display, but vulgar, unmediated class interest is another matter.

There is a yawning chasm between sensibility and interest. The Quakers were undeniably fired with enthusiasm for bourgeois ideals and institutions; they saw wage labor through rose-tinted lenses; and they fought to abolish a rival social system which they believed was displeasing to God. In none of this, however,



did they manifest calculation or avarice. On the contrary, Quaker enthusiasm for bourgeois society expressed a deep sense of destiny and calling. A new and better world was being born, and they were blessed with the moral and financial resources to assist at its birth.<sup>84</sup>

In the ferment of thought which reached fruition in this eschatology, concepts of free and slave labor played central roles. The millennium which was dawning was to be founded on labor, freed from the bondage of the slave and feudal past. Hence “abolitionism” – which was not simply opposition to slavery, but, in most cases, moral support for free labor as well – formed part and parcel of the prophetic new outlook which spurred the Quaker abolitionists into action. Indeed, according to Davis, the antislavery doctrine was something more than a simple moral or political teaching. It was part of an encompassing worldview, which “not only reflected the needs and tensions of a transitional social system, but provided a new conceptual and categorical framework that imposed its own ‘logic’ on events.”<sup>85</sup>

This is a suggestive and challenging claim, which Davis develops only partially. Sensing the incompleteness of Davis’s argument, Haskell leaps into the fray with a variation on this theme, declaring that new conventions of causal and moral perception, forged “in the crucible of market transactions,” supplied the decisive impetus to humanitarian sensibilities in this period.<sup>86</sup> The problems with Haskell’s position are legion, however. He never clearly defines “the market” or explains its connection to capitalism; he relegates class dynamics to a marginal explanatory role; he gives an exceedingly vague and banal account of the “norm of promise keeping” which, he says, is at the heart of the “market-centered form of life” (and, hence, one of the “critical preconditions” for the emergence of abolitionism); and he relies almost exclusively on abstract, ahistorical categories such as “recipe knowledge” (which apparently “proliferated” in this period, expanding the stock of “techniques” which permitted the “manipulation” of the social world”).<sup>87</sup>

Suffice it to say that, while Haskell’s intentions are benign, his results are scant. As one recent historian rightly concludes, Haskell’s stringently abstract approach “flattens out [both] the multiform origins of ‘the humanitarian sensibility’ and its chronologically differentiated mode of operation.”<sup>88</sup>

Haskell does, however, see the importance of Davis’s claim that, for Quaker abolitionists, the equation of slavery and wage slavery was “inconceivable.”<sup>89</sup> The concept of wage slavery was “culturally unavailable” to them, obscured by the logic of their worldview.<sup>90</sup> His own particular explanation of this cultural blindness is inadequate, but the problem remains. It is at this point that Marx and Weber become most immediately relevant. Each devoted a wealth of thought to the role and nature of labor ethics in capitalist society, and there are still many crucial elements of their thinking which remain to be excavated.

In the next section I will probe the relevance of a number of characteristic Marxian themes vis-à-vis wage labor and slavery, and then return for a last look at *The Antislavery Debate*.

## VEILED OPPRESSION: MARX ON WAGE LABOR AND SLAVERY

At first glance it might seem peculiar to treat Marx as an authority on questions related to abolitionism. This appearance dissipates, however, when we examine *Capital* with questions of slavery and wage labor in mind. Marx was, after all, deeply concerned with labor in all its forms, and he was living at a moment in history when slavery was being decisively eclipsed. Vol. 1 of *Capital* appeared in 1867, just after the conclusion of the Civil War, and Marx was deeply pleased by the result. It is interesting to note that Marx personally never expressed the least cynicism about the abolitionist movement, which he ardently supported. In an article on "Abolitionist Demonstrations in America," which appeared in *Die Presse* of Vienna in August, 1862, Marx sang the praises of the abolitionist Wendell Phillips, whose fiery oratory had been vilified by the *Times* of London.<sup>91</sup> "Together with [William Lloyd] Garrison and G[errit] Smith, Wendell Phillips is the leader of the abolitionists in New England. For 30 years he has without intermission and at the risk of his life proclaimed the emancipation of the slaves as his battle-cry, heedless alike of the hisses of the press, the enraged howls of paid rowdies and the conciliatory appeals of solicitous friends. Even his opponents acknowledged him as one of the greatest orators of the North, as combining iron character with forceful energy and purest conviction."<sup>92</sup>

Phillips is a key figure in the current dispute. In his final reply to Ashworth and Davis, Haskell treats Phillips as an "especially pertinent" example of an antislavery ideologue who perceived the iniquity of slavery "selectively," without a matching sensitivity to the plight of wage labor. He cites an article written by Phillips in 1847: "Except in a few crowded cities and a few manufacturing towns, I believe the terms 'wages slavery' and 'white slavery' would be utterly unintelligible to an audience of laboring people . . . There are two prominent points which distinguish the laborers in this country from the slaves. First, the laborers, as a class, are neither wronged nor oppressed . . . Does the crowded competition of the cities reduce their wages? They have only to stay at home, devoted to other pursuits, and soon diminished supply will bring the remedy . . . To economy, self-denial, temperance, education, and moral and religious character, the laboring class, and every other class in this country, must owe its elevation and improvement."<sup>93</sup>

This statement is noteworthy in several respects. To begin with, it beautifully illustrates Davis's point that the analogy between slavery and 'wages slavery' was outside the mental universe of the major abolitionists. Phillips imagines that even the majority of *workers* will find this concept "utterly unintelligible." Second, Phillips demonstrates just how limited the bourgeois reformers' grasp of working-class realities can be; few underpaid workers, then or now, would risk hunger or homelessness to "stay at home, devoted to other pursuits," waiting calmly for the "diminished supply" of labor (diminished by one!) "to bring the remedy." And lastly, Phillips shows himself to be an ideal-typical Puritan moralist, earnestly commending the virtues of self-denial, temperance, and religious character to "every . . . class in this country."<sup>94</sup>

Garrison and Smith, whom Marx names as the other two major leaders of New England abolitionism, are equally good illustrations of this moralizing insensitivity to the concerns of wage-earners. Garrison, e.g. is well-known for writing, in the founding issue of *The Liberator* in 1831, that "An attempt has been made – . . . we regret to say, with considerable success – to inflame the minds of our working classes against the more opulent, and to persuade men that they are contemned and oppressed by a wealthy aristocracy . . . . It is in the highest degree criminal . . . to exasperate our mechanics to deeds of violence or to array them under a party banner; for it is not true, that, at any time, they have been objects of reproach. Labor is not dishonorable. The industrious artisan, in a government like ours, will always be held in better estimation than the wealthy idler."<sup>95</sup> Shortly afterwards Garrison asked, pointedly, "where is the evidence that our wealthy citizens, as a body, are hostile to the interests of the laboring classes? It is not found in their commercial enterprises, which whiten the ocean with canvas, and give employment to the useful and numerous class of men: it is not found in their manufacturing establishments, which multiply labor and cheapen the necessities of the poor; it is not found in the luxuries of their tables, or the adornments of their dwellings, for which they must pay in proportion to their extravagance."<sup>96</sup>

Fifteen years later Garrison returned to this issue. The labor radical William West had written in defense of several land reformers, whose rallying cry, he wrote, is "Down with all slavery, both chattel and wages." Garrison replied sternly that it is simply "an abuse of language to talk of the slavery of wages . . . . We cannot see that it is wrong to give or receive wages."<sup>97</sup>

Gerrit Smith, a wealthy landowner, was equally direct. In July, 1844, the peripatetic agitator George Henry Evans had addressed an open letter to Smith in the *Working Man's Advocate*, asking him to recognize "that white as well as black slavery is wrong." Evans added: "suppose . . . you had the power, tomorrow, to place the black laborers of the south in the same position as the

white laborers of the north; [since] ‘cash produces more labor than the lash,’” would black workers really be free of exploitation? In reply, Smith “frankly admitted that he did not understand Evans’ reasoning, and that he had never before heard similar opinions expressed and that he could not accept them.”<sup>98</sup>

Historians today are quick to note the failure of sympathy revealed by these remarks, and many have wondered if Phillips and his allies were morally consistent in their differential judgments on slavery and wage labor.<sup>99</sup> Marx, however, unhesitatingly affirms the “iron character . . . and purest conviction” of the great abolitionist. What explains this discrepancy?

Was Marx, perhaps, unaware of the abolitionists’ thinking on labor matters? This is unlikely. For years Marx had been quite familiar with the abolitionist movement, which he strongly supported. A number of his close friends from the period before the revolutions of 1848 had migrated to the United States, where several of them played visible roles in the antislavery movement.<sup>100</sup> And Marx had worked as a journalist for many years for Horace Greeley, the owner of *The New York Daily Tribune*, who did more to popularize the analogy between slavery and wage slavery than anyone else in this period (in direct debate with Gerrit Smith and the abolitionists).<sup>101</sup> What, then, led Marx to sympathize so cordially with Phillips et al.? At least four factors seem to have been at work.

- Marx was, to start with, opposed to slavery for intrinsic reasons. He found “the peculiar institution” vile and detestable, and he believed that slaves were granted even less humanity than proletarians. The status of the worker, he wrote, is far more wretched than the status of the independent peasant: “What a gulf there is between the proud yeomanry of England of which Shakespeare speaks and the English agricultural laborer!” Yet the worker enjoys a relatively exalted status compared to the serf or slave: “In such cases the capitalist relationship appears to be an improvement of one’s position in the social scale.”<sup>102</sup> This is clearly a major reason in itself, and is perhaps decisive.
- Marx was also well aware that many of the most eloquent critics of “white slavery” were apologists for Black slavery. In a note in *Capital*, he quotes the *Times* of London, which rose to the defense of American slave-owners at the height of the Civil War: “‘Very many of us think,’ says a leading article of 2 July 1863, ‘that, while we work our own young women to death, using the scourge of starvation, instead of the crack of the whip, as the instrument of compulsion, we have scarcely a right to hound on fire and slaughter against families who were born slaveowners, and who, at least, feed their slaves well, and work them lightly.’”<sup>103</sup> This rhetoric, which echoed

Fitzhugh and other American proslavery apologists, fairly dripped with crocodile tears.<sup>104</sup>

- Meanwhile, Marx was disposed to see an elective affinity between callous treatment of workers and *proslavery* views. In *Capital*, for example, Marx says that, in large-scale industry, “every sense organ is injured by the artificially high temperatures, by the dust-laden atmosphere, by the deafening noise, not to mention the danger to life and limb among machines which are so closely crowded together, a danger which, with the regularity of the seasons, produces its list of those killed and wounded in the industrial battle.”<sup>105</sup> Hence efforts to scrimp on safety measures amount to “systematic robbery of what is necessary for the life of the worker . . .”<sup>106</sup> Here Marx appends a note, in which he quotes a report by a factory inspector: “I have heard some mill-owners speak with inexcusable levity of some of the accidents, such, for instance, as the loss of a finger being a trifling matter.” These mill-owners, Marx adds sardonically, “are ‘clever folk’ and it was not without reason that they were enthusiastically in favor of the Slave-Holder’s Rebellion.”<sup>107</sup> Heartlessness towards proletarians, in other words, is *prima facie* evidence of a lack of sympathy for all workers, slave or free. Antislavery agitators, in sharp contrast, seem to have been moved by a humane spirit.<sup>108</sup>
- Of greatest relevance, however, is the fact Marx’s *systematic theory* lends support to the thesis that wealthy abolitionists were likely to find the concept of wage slavery unintelligible. In his theory of wages, Marx offers a glimpse of the kind of “new conceptual and categorical framework” which Davis expected to find at the core of abolitionism. If Marx is right, there is, as Haskell surmised, a new “cognitive structure” at the heart of the antislavery worldview. This new structure is not a function of “The Market” in Haskell’s abstract sense, however, but of the labor market in particular. Rather than crediting “the norm of promise keeping” with decisive influence, we are led to examine the rise of what Davis calls “wage labor as a universal norm.”<sup>109</sup>

A clue about the logic of Marx’s position is available in an anecdote Davis relates. Dr. Benjamin Rush, who had once presided over the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, thought that forcing convicts to labor in public would render manual labor “ignominious.” The Quaker abolitionist John Coakley Lettsom disagreed. Even if free laborers were to see convicts performing tasks indistinguishable from their own, Lettsom reasoned, they would still understand the difference, “for however the body may be occupied alike, the mind is impressed very differently, as differently as voluntary labour, and condemned labour can impress the mind.”<sup>110</sup> Carpentry by a convict, or a slave, is plainly

different from the same labor performed by a wage-earner. The “social relations of production” differ decisively in the two cases, and so, likewise, does the social status of the worker. Horace Greeley saw this as well. In the same renowned letter in which he equated the wage-earner to the slave, he disavowed any wish to deny the value of abolitionist activism. “Still less would I undertake to say that the slavery of the South is not more hideous in kind and degree than that which prevails in the North,” Greeley added; indeed, “the fact that it *is* more flagrant and palpable renders opposition to it comparatively easy and its speedy downfall certain.”<sup>111</sup> This brings us quite close to Marx’s reasoning.

In early 1865, in what Ste. Croix calls “a brilliant passage”<sup>112</sup> in a lecture to the General Council of the International Working Men’s Association, Marx argued for the first time that free and coerced labor are systematically perceived in sharply different ways. The objective situation, Marx says, is that workers are routinely paid less than the value they add to the product. A worker, for example, whose average daily product sells for \$299.95 will normally receive far less than this in wages. This difference is partly explainable as the result of various secondary factors (overhead, etc.), but springs primarily, in normal cases, from the worker’s “unpaid labor.” Naturally, a *fraction* of the value added to the product by the worker is compensated; this is “paid labor,” which Marx also calls “necessary labor.” But the rest accrues to the capitalist without recompense, and is therefore unpaid or “surplus” labor.<sup>113</sup>

This objective reality is not, however, what people ordinarily see. Wage labor is an obscure phenomenon, Marx says, which defies easy comprehension. In this, it differs from slavery in a crucial and characteristic way. “On the basis of the wages system,” Marx explains, “even the *unpaid* labour seems to be *paid* labour. With the *slave*, on the contrary, even that part of his labour which is paid appears to be unpaid. Of course, in order to work the slave must live, and one part of his working day goes to replace the value of his own maintenance. But since no bargain is struck between him and his master, and no acts of selling and buying are going on between the two parties, all his labour seems to be given away for nothing.”<sup>114</sup>

The simplest, most “immediately perceptible” case, Marx says, is the labor of the peasant serf, which prevailed, “I might say, until yesterday . . . in the whole East of Europe,” especially in Wallachia and elsewhere in the Danubian principalities. “This peasant worked, for example, three days for himself on his own field or the field allotted to him, and the three subsequent days he performed compulsory and gratuitous labour on the estate of his lord. *Here, then, the paid and unpaid parts of labour were visibly separated, separated in time and space; and our Liberals overflowed with moral indignation at the preposterous notion of making a man work for nothing.*”<sup>115</sup>

This is a signal passage, with immediate relevance for our question about abolitionism. "Liberals," who had no moral scruples about wage labor (as Marx often shows) were nevertheless incensed by the injustice of Wallachian serfdom. Why? Because the unpaid part of the serf's labor was "*immediately perceptible*" *as such*. The Liberals, in other words, *protested the injustice they perceived*. They saw no injustice in wage labor, but they were quick to fulminate against 'the preposterous notion of making a man work for nothing.'

This point invites further scrutiny, since the Liberals were the most enlightened wing of the English capitalist class in this period. The famous leaders of the Liberal free trade faction, John Bright and Richard Cobden, were among the most vocal opponents of British support for the Confederacy in the Civil War. In this, they were highly consistent, since slavery appeared to be even more grievously unjust than serfdom. In the Wallachian case, the serfs "worked for nothing" only part of the time; in the American South, by contrast, the slaves seemed to be wholly unpaid. This is what Marx argues when he cites the *Morning Star*, the leading Liberal paper, on the very page in *Capital* where he repeats the argument (above) from his 1865 lecture.<sup>116</sup>

The *Morning Star* (which Marx once called "the organ of the freetrading gentlemen Cobden and Bright")<sup>117</sup> "*protested again and again during the American Civil War, with all the moral indignation of which man is capable, that the Negroes in the 'Confederate States' worked absolutely for nothing.*"<sup>118</sup>

Was this show of indignation sincere? Partisans of the William's thesis might be doubtful. The Quaker Bright, after all, was a cotton mill owner and Cobden was a wealthy calico printer. Both opposed not only slave labor but pro-labor legislation in Britain. It could easily be conjectured that their moral objections to slavery were a bit too good to be true. This ostensibly "Marxian" line of reasoning, however, is directly controverted by Marx, for whom Bright and Cobden were "so naïve as to be positively foolish," but not (repeat, *not*) self-serving.<sup>119</sup> They were, rather, prisoners of new "conventions of perception and conception" which quite literally prevented them from *seeing* the injustices meted out to proletarians.

Marx was well aware of the hypocrisy rife in comfortable circles, and he ironized, for example, about the "aristocratic . . . 'saints'" of the Church Missionary Society, who "show that they are Christians by the humility with which they bear the over-work, the deprivation and the hunger of others."<sup>120</sup> That Marx was far from entranced by Puritanism in particular is revealed by a point he makes late in *Capital*. After a denunciation of the barbarities visited upon Celebes, Java, and India by the so-called "Christian colonial system," Marx turns to "the colonies properly so called," where, in 1720, "those sober exponents of Protestantism, the Puritans of New England, by decrees of their assembly set a premium of [£100] on every [Indian] scalp; in 1744, after

Massachusetts Bay had proclaimed a certain tribe as rebels, the following prices were laid down: for a male scalp of 12 years and upwards, £100 in new currency, for a male prisoner £105, for women and children prisoners £50, for the scalps of women and children £50.<sup>121</sup>

Nor was Marx unaware of the synergy between Puritanism and capitalism. To show just how conscientiously “the representatives of Protestant theology” normally “glorified misery,” Marx quotes our old friend “Parson Townsend” at length.<sup>122</sup> And in many passages, most of which have been neglected, he shows a keen sensitivity to the moral aspects of the asceticism which workers were asked to internalize. In one especially rich passage, Marx explains in detail how the very structure of the ‘free labor’ experience tends to instill a qualitatively heightened sense of personal responsibility in workers.<sup>123</sup>

Yet Marx does not believe that bourgeois abolitionism, however “selective” in its sensibilities, is merely a mask for class interest. On the contrary, Marx says that, in contrast to the “unqualified slavery” of ancient Rome or the American South, wage labor is a kind of “veiled slavery,” which, for most observers, remains shrouded in mystery. “Suppose the working day consists of six hours of [paid] necessary labour and six hours of [unpaid] surplus labour,” Marx says. “Then the free worker gives the capitalist  $6 \times 6$  or 36 hours of surplus labour every week. It is the same as if he worked three days in the week for himself and three days in the week gratis for the capitalist. But this fact is not directly visible. Surplus labour and necessary labour are mingled together. I can therefore express the same relation by saying for instance that in every minute the worker works 30 seconds for himself and 30 seconds for the capitalist . . .”<sup>124</sup>

Even workers find it difficult to penetrate this mystery of the divided workday. Time is invisible, money is abstract, and “the nature of the whole transaction is completely masked by the intervention of a contract, and [by] the *pay* received at the end of the week. The gratuitous labour appears to be voluntarily given . . .”

“That,” Marx says, “makes all the difference.”<sup>125</sup>

Slave labor seems to be wholly unpaid. Wage labor, by contrast, seems to be fully and fairly remunerated the moment the wage contract is honored by the payment of wages. “We may therefore understand,” Marx says, “the decisive importance of the transformation of the value and price of labour-power into the form of wages . . . *All the notions of justice held by both the worker and the capitalist, . . . all capitalism’s illusions about freedom, . . . have as their basis [this] form of appearance, which makes the actual relation invisible, and indeed presents to the eye the precise opposite of that relation.*”<sup>126</sup> Antislavery teachings may have been marred by “illusions about freedom,” but



they are unlikely to have been routinely disingenuous or self-serving. Barclay and Dillwyn undoubtedly *did* find the notion of wage slavery inconceivable; Phillips and Garrison were probably entirely sincere when they called this category “unintelligible,” a simple “abuse of language.” No less sincere were the Liberals Bright and Cobden when they found it right and proper to embrace anti-labor legislation as well as abolitionism. The explanation, if Marx is right, lies in the inner nature of wage labor itself.

Marx saw little point in belaboring the best of bourgeois reformers for the imperfections of their vision. His goal, rather, was to grasp the immanent dynamic that restricts vision in capitalist society. Accomplishing this is all the more important, he felt, because the reigning “illusions of freedom” and “notions of justice” in this society are all too often “*held by both the worker and the capitalist.*” This is the premise behind Marx’s ill-understood claim that “Labour in a white skin cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in a black skin.”<sup>127</sup>

Marx believed that workers in the United States would continue to regard wage labor as a lesser evil, or even as a positive good, until slave labor had been overturned. This is shown by the very first public statement ever issued by the International Working Men’s Association, a congratulatory address “To Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America,” on the occasion of his re-election in 1864.<sup>128</sup> Marx, the sole author of this statement, opened with a stirring attack on the Confederate claim to embody an alternative to capitalism. It was indeed a travesty, he wrote, “when an oligarchy of 300,000 slave-holders dared to inscribe, for the first time in the annals of the world, ‘slavery’ on the banner of Armed Revolt; when on the very spots where hardly a century ago the idea of one great Democratic Republic had first sprung up, . . . counter-revolution . . . maintained ‘slavery to be a beneficent institution,’ indeed the only solution of the great problem of ‘the relation of labour to capital,’ and cynically proclaimed property in man ‘the corner-stone of the new edifice . . .’”<sup>129</sup> Indeed, far from solving the “great problem” of class conflict, slavery added fuel to the fire. White working people in the North and South alike “were unable to attain the true freedom of labour or to support their European brethren in their struggle for emancipation” as long as they “allowed slavery to defile their own republic.” Why did Marx believe this? Largely, he suggests, because the workers were trapped by their own prejudices (which, in this case, seem to have been a potent mixture of racial bias and “illusions of freedom”): “. . . before the Negro, [who was] mastered and sold without his concurrence, [the workers] boasted it the highest prerogative of the white-skinned labourer to sell himself and choose his own master.”<sup>130</sup>

White wage-earners, who faced grievous problems of their own, were less likely to grasp the full magnitude of their dilemma as long as slavery in the South continued to cast a long moral and conceptual shadow over wage labor. In a sense, even the metaphor of “wage slavery” put wage labor in the shade of the peculiar institution. Marx wanted to see “unqualified” slavery abolished, once and for all – and he hoped to see the working class pierce the veil of wage labor as well.

Once the Slave Power was overthrown, Marx believed that working people had a far better chance of penetrating – and challenging – the “wage-form” of labor. This was the substantive point of his remark about “labour in a white skin,” which Marx did not intend as a simple truism or *obiter dictum*. This is clear in context: “In the United States of America,” Marx wrote, “every independent workers’ movement was paralyzed as long as slavery disfigured a part of the republic. Labour in a white skin cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in the black skin. However, a new life immediately arose from the death of slavery. The first fruit of the American Civil War was the eight hours’ agitation, which ran from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from New England to California, with the seven-league boots of the locomotive. The General Congress of Labour held at Baltimore in August 1866 declared: ‘The first and great necessity of the present, to free the labour of this country from capitalistic slavery, is the passing of a law by which eight hours shall be the normal working day in all States of the American Union. We are resolved to put forth all our strength until this glorious result is attained’.”<sup>131</sup>

This rhetoric of “capitalistic slavery” was *à propos* when it was used, not to trivialize chattel slavery or downplay its unique horrors, but to stress the need to further emancipate labor. On the very next page, Marx emphasizes that wage labor is a hard experiential reality, not simply a contract. “The contract by which he sold his labour-power to the capitalist proved in black and white, so to speak, that he was free to dispose of himself. But when the transaction was concluded, it was discovered that he was no ‘free agent,’ that the period of time for which he is free to sell his labour-power is the period of time for which he forced to sell it, that in fact the vampire will not let go ‘while there remains a single muscle, sinew, or drop of blood to be exploited.’ For ‘protection’ against the serpent of their agonies, the workers have to put their heads together and, as a class, compel the passing of a law . . . by which they can be prevented from selling themselves and their families into slavery and death by voluntary contract with capital.”<sup>132</sup>

Black workers, like white workers, had now become universally available for the veiled, voluntary slavery of the wage-earner. Hence the illusion that freedom had been wholly and definitively attained should be directly

*confronted*, Marx felt. Even Wendell Phillips now agreed. Near the end of the Civil War, at a mass labor meeting where it was resolved to demand the eight-hour day, Phillips rejoiced that the “struggle for the ownership of labor is now somewhat near its end;” and now, he told his listeners, “we fitly commence a struggle to define and to arrange the true relations of capital and labor.” Six years later he had concluded that the wage system itself was morally bankrupt.<sup>133</sup>

Marx believed that the great triumph over the Slave Power heralded still greater victories to come. In part this optimism sprang from his conviction that slavery would no longer muddy the waters when workers tried to decode the “hieroglyphs” of the wage system.

## CONCLUSION

In retrospect, Marx’s optimism seems rather faded and forlorn. The ideal of “the fair wage” has been enshrined as a leading principle of trade unionism in numberless places, and comparatively few ordinary, rank-and-file workers still find the slogan of “wage slavery” particularly compelling. But Marx’s analytic focus on the notions of justice which correspond to the inner nature of the wage relationship seems, if anything, more *à propos* than ever. Twenty years ago David Brion Davis sparked a raging debate among historians by calling for inquiry into “the conditions which weakened the traditional screening mechanisms of Western culture; which removed slavery from the list of supposedly inevitable misfortunes of life; and which made it easier to perceive – in a moral sense – the inherent contradictions of human bondage.”<sup>134</sup> Though Davis, like Ashworth, believes that this shift in moral perception is connected, somehow, to the rise of wage labor, he is unable to specify what precisely this connection may be. Marx, whether right or wrong, takes just this step. Anyone who agrees with Davis that the antislavery movement arose on the foundation of an epochal shift in moral reasoning should find Marx’s analysis of this shift intriguing.

Anyone, meanwhile, who finds interest in the issues raised by Goldthorpe, Kiser and Hechter should consider the implications of this argument for the relationship between history and theory. If Marx’s theory permits us to grasp or glimpse an otherwise opaque aspect of the antislavery ethic, it constitutes an example of precisely the kind of theory that historians and sociologists can actually *use* to pierce the veil of the past. Is Marx’s theory “complete,” “general” or “testable” in the sense urged by Kiser and Hechter? Plainly not. History, unfortunately, is seldom susceptible to nomothetic inquiry. But Marx’s theory is systematic to an extent rarely equaled. The basis of his thinking is systematic

*critique*, focused, not on axioms, but on social systems. Different social systems rise on the foundation of different kinds of labor, and these differences, carefully analyzed, open the door to systematic *comparison* as well. Marx's insight into the content and appearance of unpaid labor is quite general. Why? Again, not because Marx seeks to find "laws" in history, but because he wishes to understand what *happened* in the past. This requires both critique (to understand in principle what historians understand in detail) and comparison (to find overlaps and contrasts between different societies). "Grounded" theoretical comparisons of this type permit us to see facets of the past that may elude people who know only a single setting. This kind of grounded comparison, plainly, is what gives Marx's insight into the various forms and perceptions of labor its "generalizability." Seeing, as Marx does, that people perceive unpaid labor differently in different contexts permits extrapolations about the moral consequences of such perception.

Grounded critical comparison of this kind is by no means a methodological panacea, uniformly *à propos* for all problems, and the results it yields are far less general than many people would wish. But comparison offers the prospect of a degree of real generalizability, however imperfect. The same questions that arise in connection with one historical problem often arise in connection with others as well – and similar principles of critique may apply. Consider, e.g. the issue of child labor, as posed in a study by Viviana Zelizer that Quadagno and Knapp praise as an exemplar of grounded sociological narrative. As Zelizer shows, a kind of second abolitionism arose in connection with child labor in the period between 1870 and 1930, reframing many of the classic themes of the earlier antislavery movement. Here, too, "the screening mechanisms of Western culture" were ultimately so weakened that child labor, like antebellum slave labor, was deleted "from the list of supposedly inevitable misfortunes of life."

In 1906, the very first Congressional effort to legislate against child labor was defined by its author as a measure to end "child slavery."<sup>135</sup> An effective "abolitionist" league was founded that protested the reduction of "the child of God [into] the child of Mammon,"<sup>136</sup> and parents were indicted just as harshly as employers for sending children into what the poet Blake had once called the "dark Satanic mills" of industrialism. "Those who are fight-ing for the rights of children," a reformer wrote, "almost invariably . . . find their stoutest foes in fathers and mothers, who coin shameful dollars from the bodies and souls of their own flesh and blood."<sup>137</sup> Soon powerful forces were arrayed against this peculiar institution – including, not least, important sectors of industry. "Why," then, "did twentieth-century child labor lose its nineteenth-century good reputation? What explains the sudden vehemence and urgency to remove all children from the labor market?" This question returns us to the terrain of the

Davis/Haskell dispute, and, once again, the terms of the debate are familiar: "Most historical interpretations focus on the effect of structural, economic and technological changes . . . . The success of industrial capitalism is assigned primary responsibility for putting children out of work and into schools to satisfy the growing demand for a skilled, educated labor force."<sup>138</sup>

Zelizer agrees that the prolonged struggle over child labor was, in part, "an economic confrontation," but it was also, she writes, "a profound 'moral revolution.' Two groups with sharply conflicting views of childhood struggled to impose their definition of children's proper place in society."<sup>139</sup> Without trying to resolve this issue here, or to reduce it to the terms of the earlier discussion, I will simply say that Zelizer makes a strong case for this contention. Formidable sectors of capital and labor were aligned on both sides in this dispute, and, until 1938, every Congressional effort to regulate child labor was defeated by an intransigent and well-organized opposition. There is no doubt that moneyed interests were well represented among the 'general causal' forces at work in this particular conflict, but it seems clear that moral concerns were deeply implicated as well.

Zelizer, who draws on the example of many classical sociologists, offers a cogent analysis which unites original historiography with 'grounded' critical comparison. It is perhaps her greatest strength, as Quadagno and Knaapp observe, that "she is comparing transformations in a theoretical category – belief systems – across time."<sup>140</sup> Her research, then, is yet another example to be emulated.

Inquiries of this kind may prove to have considerable explanatory power. If this conjecture is borne out by subsequent research, it will be interesting to see just how far we can go with grounded critical comparisons of this kind.

## NOTES

1. Andrew Abbott, "History and Sociology: The Lost Synthesis," in *Social Science History*, 15 (2), Summer 1991, p. 230.

2. An article "essentially in the post-modernist vein . . . drew more derisive fire" from readers "than anything [else] we have ever published," according to the editor of a leading social history journal. (See Peter N. Stearns, "Encountering Postmodernism," in the *Journal of Social History*, 24(2), Winter 1990, p. 449. The article in question was "Theorizing the Writing of History" by Elizabeth Smith & Ellen Somekawa, 1988.) The eminent social historian Lawrence Stone precipitated a parallel controversy in *Past and Present* in 1991. See, e.g. the replies by Patrick Joyce and Catriona Kelly under the joint title "History and Post-Modernism," Parts 1 & 2, in *Past & Present*, No. 133, November 1991. Other, similar controversies are reported by Saul Cornell in "Early American History in a Postmodern Age," in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, L (2), April 1993, p. 330, n. 4.

3. Both articles appeared in 1991: John H. Goldthorpe, "The Uses of History in Sociology: Reflections on Some Recent Tendencies," in *The British Journal of Sociology*, 42(2), June, and Edgar Kiser & Michael Hechter, "The Role of General Theory in Comparative-Historical Sociology," in *American Journal of Sociology*, 97(1), July. In response to criticisms, Goldthorpe has also published an anticritical sequel to his original article, "The Uses of History in Sociology – A Reply," in *The British Journal of Sociology*, 45(1), March 1994. Henceforward these articles will be cited as "Goldthorpe, 1991," "Goldthorpe, 1994," and "Kiser and Hechter."

4. See also the useful criticisms of Goldthorpe by Michael Mann, "In Praise of Macro-Sociology: A Reply to Goldthorpe"; Nicos Mouzelis, "In Defence of 'Grand' Historical Sociology"; Nicky Hart, "John Goldthorpe and the Relics of Sociology"; and Joseph Bryant, "Evidence and Explanation in History and Sociology"; all in *The British Journal of Sociology*, 45(1), March 1994. For a lucid critique of the Kiser/Hechter article which places equal stress on methodological and substantive issues, see Jill Quadagno and Stan J. Knapp, "Have Historical Sociologists Forsaken Theory? Thoughts on the History/Theory Relationship," in *Sociological Methods & Research*, 20(4), May 1992.

5. Goldthorpe, 1991, p. 212; Kiser and Hechter, p. 3. "Nomothetic" sociology, the search for general social laws, has been traditionally contrasted to the "idiographic" particularism of historiography. The provenance of these terms dates back to Windelband and the debate over methods that divided German philosophers of the cultural sciences a century ago.

6. Goldthorpe, 1991, p. 214; Kiser and Hechter, pp. 2, 10, 11. "The epistemological justification of historicism rests on Weber's method of *Verstehen* . . . and on phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions . . ." Though there is an "empirical historicism" as well, "We will . . . focus on the interpretive form of historicism (based on the work of Weber and phenomenologist [sic] and hermeneutic philosophy) and refer to it simply as *historicism* throughout" (Ibid., pp. 10–11 and 10, n. 19). This historicism rests on "a conventionalist philosophy that leads to a rejection of general causal laws," operative, allegedly, in society just as in nature (Ibid., p. 11).

7. Goldthorpe, 1991: pp. 220, 219; emphasis in the original.

8. Kiser and Hechter, p. 9. The leading influence of "*marxisant*" scholars is alleged by Goldthorpe, 1991, p. 228, n. 21. Michael Mann, a focal point of criticism in both articles, notes that he and other objects of Goldthorpe's ire "are often labelled 'neo-Weberians.'" Mann, op. cit., p. 52, n. 2.

9. Goldthorpe, 1991, p. 230. In the next sentence Hexter is praised for a *bon mot* to the effect that, when gifted historians clash, their claims are unlikely "ever to be proved." Since, empirically, historians have been known to disagree on absolutely everything, this conclusion can hardly be comforting for anyone who seeks knowledge of history. (Goldthorpe, plainly, does not belong to this group, though he expresses benign sentiments about the prospect of expanding the "space and time coordinates" of nomothetic theory.)

10. Kiser and Hechter, p. 10.

11. Goldthorpe, 1994, p. 76, n. 9.

12. I should say, in all fairness, that Kiser and Hechter apply their methodological rules with imagination and rigor, and that the specific theories they discuss (Hechter's "group solidarity theory" and Jensen & Meckling's "agency theory") are quite promising. This is not, however, because theories of this kind *alone* are possible, but because they

are *also* possible (on occasion). Weber explained this well when he said that the axiom of rational interest does indeed have true explanatory power – but only for the comparatively small percentage of cases which are, in fact, guided by more or less ideal-typical rationality. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol. 1 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978, first published in 1922), pp. 6–26.

13. Kiser and Hechter, p. 19.

14. Kiser and Hechter, p. 21; cf. Quadagno & Knapp, op. cit., p. 495.

15. Kiser and Hechter, p. 22. Michael Mann and Theda Skocpol are the specific targets of this criticism, as representatives of the outlook Kiser and Hechter wish to oppose.

16. Goldthorpe, 1994, p. 71. Here, too, Michael Mann (in company with Joseph Bryant) is the main target of criticism.

17. Besides “*marxisant*” scholars (Moore, Wallerstein, Anderson), Goldthorpe also subjects Weberian and Durkheimian theorists to even-handed critical scrutiny. Kai Erikson’s *Wayward Puritans* is found to be “*perversely*” deficient in sociological sense, Gordon Marshall’s effort to analyze “the Weber thesis” on the basis of Scottish history (*Presbyteries and Profits*) is deemed to be hopelessly insufficient, etc.

18. See Frank J. Klingberg, *The Anti-Slavery Movement in England: A Study in English Humanitarianism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926); Sir Reginald Coupland, *The British Antislavery Movement* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933); and Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1966; first published in 1944). Williams criticized Coupland directly in a later work, *British Historians and the West Indies* (New York, 1966).

19. See Thomas Bender, Ed., *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1992). For further discussion of the Williams Thesis, see, e.g. the essays by David Brion Davis, Seymour Drescher, Howard Temperley and Michael Craton in Barbara L. Solow and Stanley L. Engerman, Eds., *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Note, also, that Craton makes an interesting argument in defense of the position that Williams has been interpreted in a somewhat one-dimensional way, and that, in fact, his views were more subtle than they are usually said to have been.

20. The opening chapters of *The Antislavery Debate* originally appeared in David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1973). Following these opening chapters we find: Haskell’s essay, a reply by Davis, a commentary by Ashworth, a lengthy reply by Haskell, and two previously unpublished responses by Davis and Ashworth. In what follows, these texts will be cited using the following abbreviations:

Full title	Abbreviated title
Thomas Bender, “Introduction”	Bender
David Brion Davis, “The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution”	Davis, “Problem”
Thomas L. Haskell, “Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1”	Haskell, “Humanitarianism: 1”

Full title	Abbreviated title
Thomas L. Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 2"	Haskell, "Humanitarianism: 2"
David Brion Davis, "Reflections on Abolitionism and Ideological Hegemony"	Davis, "Reflections"
John Ashworth, "The Relationship between Capitalism and Humanitarianism"	Ashworth, "The Relationship"
Thomas L. Haskell, "Convention and Hegemonic Interest in the Debate over Antislavery: A Reply to Davis and Ashworth:"	Haskell, "A Reply"
John Ashworth, "Capitalism, Class, and Slavery"	Ashworth, "Capitalism"
David Brion Davis, "The Perils of Doing History by Ahistorical Abstraction: A Reply to Thomas L. Haskell's <i>AHR Forum</i> Reply"	Davis, "Perils"

21. Bender, p. 13.

22. Haskell, "A Reply," p. 201.

23. Bender, p. 11, n. 8.

24. Bender, p. 3, 4.

25. Bender, p. 7.

26. Bender, p. 4, 5; citing Davis, "Problem," p. 45 (p. 233 in Davis's original book).

27. Bender, p. 11.

28. Bender, p. 7. "Haskell not only draws upon philosophy but constructs a self-consciously theoretical argument" (Ibid).

29. Ashworth, "The Relationship," p. 180. Later in the debate, after several critical exchanges had taken place, Ashworth took a far more jaundiced position on Haskell's argument, finding "an extraordinary set of non sequiturs and red herrings" in his reply to criticism (Ashworth, "Capitalism," p. 271).

30. The only line of Marx's which Haskell cites ("All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned") is quoted indirectly by Haskell from an article of Marshall Berman's in *Dissent* (see "A Reply," p. 230). This line, it should be noted, is one of the most famous of all Marx's phrases and appeared originally in the *Communist Manifesto*; in *Capital* Marx quotes this line himself, and in the movie *Morgan* it is even recited aloud. (As it happens, Davis also quotes Marx only once, and just as indirectly, quoting another of Marx's famous lines from Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station*; see *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, p. 455).

31. Haskell, in fact, prides himself on a kind of "moderate historicism" which he believes falls between the Scylla and Charybdis of pure "neo-Nietzschean" relativism and Platonizing axiological foundationalism (see Thomas L. Haskell, "The Curious Persistence of Rights Talk in the 'Age of Interpretation'," in *The Journal of American History*, 74(3), December 1987). Like Rawls and Kuhn, Haskell defends a conventionalist philosophy of science which, he says, is "a few vital shades" less radical than



Rorty's famed neo-pragmatism (p. 1010). He shows a weak grasp of the epistemological issues in dispute, though, when he says that Alasdair MacIntyre, "like me, is presumably a moderate historicist, trying to thread his path between [Leo] Strauss and Nietzsche" (p. 1002). MacIntyre is actually decisively closer to Strauss than to Nietzsche. Equal confusion is displayed in the disparity between Haskell's early pronouncement that, if forced to choose between Plato and Nietzsche, he would choose Plato – and his later affirmation of a conventionalist stance much substantively closer to Nietzsche (see pp. 986 and passim). Either truth is transcendently real or conventionally valid. Haskell – like Bender in his recent book *Intellect and Public Life* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 3–4 and 147–148 – takes a conventionalist stance. The difference would not be lost on Kiser and Hechter, or upon others who grasp the essential truth of Haskell's melodramatic claim (p. 994), in yet another mood, that "The chasm that yawns between Strauss and Nietzsche is as deep and wide as any known to mankind."

32. The promise of this kind of analysis is what Haskell seems to have sensed when he called attention to the prospect of mapping 'the conceptual structure' of convention and perception in 'the age of the market.' A map of this kind is certainly possible, and it would indeed shed light on abolitionism, just as Haskell suspects. While his own attempt to chart this logic is flawed, the effort is still very much worth making. See especially Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (New York, Victoria, and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and Tony Smith, *Dialectical Social Theory and Its Critics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993).

33. Haskell, "Humanitarianism: 1," p. 112. Elsewhere, in a show of modesty, Haskell refers to himself as "a rude stowaway in Davis's finely crafted historiographical vessel," admitting "the obvious dependence of my work on his." (Haskell, "A Reply," p. 200) Bender, distressed by the metaphor, assures Haskell that he should be viewed, on the contrary, "as a wise sailor who urges upon the captain better riggings and navigational equipment for a journey to a destination fairly well agreed upon" (Bender, p. 12).

34. Haskell, "Humanitarianism: 1," p. 112.

35. Haskell, "Humanitarianism: 1," p. 113.

36. Haskell, "Humanitarianism: 1," p. 110.

37. Haskell, "Humanitarianism: 1," p. 111. Haskell agrees that Davis opens a "zone of indeterminacy" when he denies that the abolitionists *consciously* sought social hegemony, and this, he says, saves Davis from "the implication of conspiracy that so marred the work of Eric Williams." (Haskell, "Humanitarianism: 1," pp. 116, 119). "Yet it is also indispensable to Davis's purpose that the gap between intentions and consequences not grow too wide, for, if the aid and comfort that abolitionism gave to capitalist hegemony was utterly unrelated to the intentions of the reformers, or if it was related only in an incidental or accidental way, Davis would have to abandon his conclusion." Haskell, "Humanitarianism: 1," pp. 116–117.

38. Haskell grants that Davis escapes simple reductionism by affirming the unself-conscious character of abolitionist service to capitalism, but he also derides Davis for this view: "Davis's evidence for thinking that the abolitionists unconsciously intended to legitimate free labor . . . consists essentially of two classes of facts: the first showing that critics advanced this interpretation (or something close enough to it to lend it credibility), and the second that the abolitionists did not take the trouble to disavow in writing the intention to legitimate free labor." (Haskell, "A Reply," p. 215). Elsewhere, with equal sarcasm, he writes that "the fact abolitionists could have been more

concerned with the plight of the free laborer does not justify the speculation that they really knew they should be and only failed to be because they deceived themselves.” “Humanitarianism: 1,” p. 125. This sarcasm, as we will see, is badly misplaced.

39. Haskell, “A Reply,” pp. 205–206.

40. Haskell, “A Reply,” p. 206. Besides Genovese et al., Haskell cites Raymond Williams “and many other scholars [who] have drawn theoretical inspiration from the work of Gramsci.” Haskell, “Humanitarianism: 1,” p. 118.

41. Haskell, “Humanitarianism: 1,” p. 111.

42. Haskell, “Humanitarianism: 1,” p. 111.

43. Haskell, “Humanitarianism: 1,” p. 111, n. 7. Haskell has also written about Durkheim. See, e.g. “Professionalism versus Capitalism: R. H. Tawney, Émile Durkheim, and C. S. Peirce on the Disinterestedness of Professional Communities,” in Thomas L. Haskell, *The Authority of Experts* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1984).

44. Haskell, “A Reply,” p. 238. Cf. p. 237 as well.

45. Haskell, “A Reply,” pp. 239–240. Haskell continues to weave ostensibly Weberian themes into his work. See, e.g. his essay “Persons as Uncaused Causes: John Stuart Mill, the Spirit of Capitalism, and the ‘Invention’ of Formalism,” in Thomas L. Haskell and Richard Teichgraber, Eds, *The Culture of the Market: Historical Essays* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially pp. 458f. The continuing weakness of his appropriation of Weber will be discussed in a forthcoming companion essay on Weber.

46. Davis, “Perils,” p. 298.

47. Davis, “Perils,” p. 303.

48. Davis, “Perils,” p. 298.

49. Davis, “Perils,” p. 303.

50. Davis, “Problem,” p. 19.

51. Davis, “Problem,” p. 19. At this point in his career, Davis consistently used stereotyped gender language (“man’s experience,” “man’s moral perception”). His vocabulary is now more gender-neutral.

52. Davis, “Problem,” p. 25.

53. See, e.g. Thomas Edward Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), pp. 1-49.

54. Davis, “Problem,” p. 29.

55. Davis, “Problem,” p. 30.

56. In 1783, Quakers in Philadelphia and London sent matching petitions to both Parliament and the Continental Congress (Davis, “Problem,” p. 32). Davis credits the “unparalleled” success of the international Quaker communications network both to “the incredible commercial success of enterprising Quakers” and to “the Quaker ethic, which gave its adherents the confident sense of being members of an extended family whose business and personal affairs were united in a seamless sphere” (Davis, “Problem,” p. 39).

57. Davis, “Problem,” p. 37, n. 17. In connection with this point Davis cites a doctoral dissertation by Patrick Cleburne Lipscomb, *William Pitt and the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, which was accepted at the University of Texas in 1960.

58. Davis, “Problem,” p. 37, n. 17, citing Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* (London, 1808), Vol. 1, p. 571.

59. Davis, "Problem," p. 45.

60. Davis, "Problem," p. 45.

61. Davis, "Problem," p. 50–51.

62. Davis, "Problem," p. 50. Davis uncovered evidence showing that skilled craftsmen were among the leaders of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society in this period. Since Pennsylvania was still primarily a Quaker realm, it is likely that most of these artisans were Quakers, and Davis conjectures that they "may have been relatively well-to-do"; still, he notes, "they represent a class that was unseen among the Parisian *Amis des noirs*, the London Abolition society, or, with two or three exceptions, among the New York Manumission Society" (Davis, "Problem," p. 50).

63. Davis, "Problem," p. 49.

64. See Herman Schlüter, *Lincoln, Labor and Slavery* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965; reprinted from the first edition of 1913), p. 105. Interestingly, archival research at the Hoover Institute in California shows that an early pamphlet Schlüter wrote on the Chartist movement includes several pages ghostwritten by Friedrich Engels (I plan to release fuller information on this point soon). Schlüter, who was at one time party archivist of the German Social Democratic Party, is an unjustly neglected figure, whose historical work is admirable in many ways – though it is plainly not distinguished for its psychological insight.

65. Davis, "Problem," p. 69.

66. Davis, "Problem," pp. 69–70. Davis calls an essay by Anstey ("A Re-interpretation of the Abolition of the British Slave Trade, 1806–1807," in the *English Historical Review*, 87, April 1972) "one of the most convincing" criticisms of Williams.

67. Davis, "Problem," p. 55. In the cited passage Davis is exonerating William Allen, in particular, of the suspicion of hypocrisy; but this point clearly applies to Davis's view of the large majority of influential Quaker abolitionists, not simply Allen.

68. Davis, "Problem," p. 39: "Both in England and America, the quietists' appeal for absolute purity and selflessness struck the conscience of Friends who were dismayed by bloody Indian wars on the American frontier or by their own indirect complicity in the wars with France."

69. Davis, "Problem," p. 61.

70. Haskell often contradicts himself on this subject. In several places he affirms that interest is, "of course," a real force in history, but elsewhere he sharply undercuts the force of this affirmation. Consider, for example, the judgment he pronounces in his initial essay: "Interest explains much, but it explains by reduction" (Haskell, "Humanitarianism: 1," p. 118). One might well conclude that an explanation "by reduction" hardly qualifies as a *valid* explanation! And everything Haskell says positively about the nexus of capitalism and abolitionism is on the other side of the ledger. Ashworth, in his second essay, gives vent to a certain degree of astonishment about Haskell's reasoning here: "I originally welcomed [Haskell's] argument in that it did invite historians to be more careful than they sometimes are in their use of the term 'interest.' I never had any suspicion that it would be used to claim that all interpretations emphasizing interests should be seen as utterly vacuous. Yet this is apparently the claim Haskell is making, for after acknowledging that interest 'can never be ruled out,' he added that 'there is no act so incontrovertibly disinterested that it cannot be construed as self-interested by enclosing it within a suitable interpretive framework.' However, 'the ease with which any sophomore can perform this trick should make us skeptical of its value.' Here it was Haskell who had performed the conjuring trick, though one unlikely to

impress any readers who had difficulty imagining a history of human society that gives no explanatory weight to interests" (Ashworth, "Capitalism," p. 271).

71. Davis, "Problem," p. 25.

72. Davis, "Problem," p. 62.

73. This sensibility is plain, for example, in an interesting collection of comparative studies in which the contrast between slave labor and wage labor is put into historical perspective; see Michael Twaddle, ed., *The Wages of Slavery: From Chattel Slavery to Wage Labour in Africa, the Caribbean and England* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1993).

74. Francklyn was very clear about this, saying that the abolitionists, "by preaching, writing, and publishing" in opposition to slavery, risked inciting "the soldier, the artisan, and the peasant, to assert their rights to an equal portion of liberty with those who now lord it over them . . ." (See Davis, "Problem," p. 67, citing a pamphlet first published in 1788).

75. Davis, "Problem," p. 71.

76. Davis, "Problem," p. 63. Barclay had written a tract instructing servants in properly servile habits.

77. ". . . except," Dillwyn added, "where the factories had become nurseries of vice" (Davis, "Problem," p. 63). Dillwyn's presumption here is that factories themselves are wholesome and blameless; since creeping vice can penetrate even here, however, eternal vigilance is needed to spot and stop it. For data on Dillwyn's personal history, see *ibid.*, pp. 45–46.

78. Jonathan A. Glickstein, who studied with Davis, has contributed a major study on aspects of this conception. See Glickstein, *Concepts of Free Labor in Antebellum America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991).

79. Davis, "Problem," p. 78.

80. Davis, "Problem," p. 79.

81. Davis, "Problem," p. 78–79, cited by Davis from Joseph Townsend, "A Dissertation on the Poor Laws," in J. R. McCulloch (Ed.), *A Select Collection of Scarce and Valuable Economical Tracts* (London, 1859, p. 404).

82. Davis, "Problem," p. 61. He adds: "Abolitionists never tired of contrasting the impersonality of slavery to the benevolent paternalism that most English workers still enjoyed." (*Ibid.*, p. 101) And the Quakers, in particular, "demonstrated that testimony against slavery could be a social correlative of inner purity which seemed to pose no threat to the social order – at least to that capitalist order in which the Quakers had won so enviable a 'stake'" (*Ibid.*, p. 61).

83. Davis, "Problem," p. 95. Davis gives the Reverend James Ramsay as an example of this concern, citing Ramsay's "highly praised *Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves*" (1784) to illustrate his point. For Ramsay, we learn, "there is a natural inequality . . . which prevails among men that fits them for society." This natural inequality is formalized in the labor contract. "Thus," Davis says, "he finds that the entrepreneur's 'superiority,' derived from the ownership of material, is balanced by the workingman's 'liberty' to accept or refuse employment." The contract alone, however, is not enough to assure the workers' fidelity. For this – to guarantee "obedience to legitimate authority" – religion is a necessary supplement. (See Davis, "Problem," pp. 95–96)

84. The "laboring poor," of course, tended to see matters in a different light – since they were dragooned into factories which appeared to them to be less moral citadels than "Houses of Terror" (a phrase Marx noted in *Capital*).

85. Davis, "Problem," p. 71.

86. Haskell, "Humanitarianism: 1," p. 111 and *passim*. In several places Haskell says that he is deeply indebted to Davis for his main line of argument – yet he expresses surprise that Davis does not object to the very claims he borrowed from him! "My crucial claim . . . is that the market was one of the major factors in the expansion of causal horizons. Pivotal though the claim is, Davis and Ashworth put up surprisingly little resistance to it" (Haskell, "A Reply," p. 228). Since Davis pioneered this conception, it would indeed have been strange for him to "resist" it. The issue here is not *whether* capitalist market relations affected the "causal horizons" of the abolitionists, but by what *means* and in what way this occurred. Hence the peculiarity of another of Haskell's anti-critical remarks: "Nothing," he says, "has seemed more shocking to my critics than my suggestion that the capitalist marketplace had something important to do with the establishment of these cognitive preconditions for the emergence of the humanitarian sensibility." (Haskell, "A Reply," p. 227) This, it should be plain, is a surpassingly strange remark. Unless Haskell believes that the labor market is unrelated to The Market, it is difficult to understand what he can possibly mean – since the whole of Davis's argument turns on precisely the issue of "causal horizons" related to the purchase of wage-paid labor power in the labor market.

87. Haskell, "Humanitarianism: 2," pp. 136, 144, 146–148, 152, 155. The sheer banality of Haskell's argument is plain in many of his central assertions; for example, the claim that promise-keeping reflected "a still more fundamental lesson the market taught: to attend to the remote consequences of one's acts," and that it expressed "the market's thirst for foresight" and personal responsibility. (*Ibid.*, pp. 150–151) As Davis and Ashworth are quick to observe, this brave new worldview is less a theoretical coup than a modified version of the very moral claims advanced by the Puritan reformers themselves. Haskell, like Malthus and Townsend, sees "the market" as a vehicle of moral education, giving rise to foresight, responsibility, humanitarianism, "expanded causal horizons," etc.

88. See David Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery, 1780–1860* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 232–233.

89. Haskell emphasizes these phrases in "Humanitarianism: 1," p. 116.

90. Haskell, "A Reply," p. 258.

91. "Anything more violent it is impossible to imagine," the *Times* editorialized, "and anything more daring in a time of Civil War was never said in any country by any sane man who valued his life or liberty." Cited by Marx in "Abolitionist Demonstrations in America," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works, Vol. 19, 1861–1864* (New York: International Publishers, 1984), pp. 233–234.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 233. I've slightly modified the translation (e.g. changing "persiflage" to "hisses," which better captures Marx's tone and meaning).

93. Haskell excerpts this passage from John R. Commons, *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, Vol. 7, pp. 220–221. He had cited it earlier, in his original criticism of Davis, on the basis of a citation in Daniel Rodgers, *The Work Ethic in Industrial America, 1850–1920* (Chicago, 1978), p. 32. See Haskell, "A Reply," p. 252–253, and "Humanitarianism: 1," p. 148. The article in question was first published in *The Liberator* on July 9, 1847, under the title "The Question of Labor," and it now appears in full in Foner and Shapiro, *op. cit.*, pp. 6–7. See the discussion of this article, by Jonathan A. Glickstein, 'Poverty Is Not Slavery': American Abolitionists and the Competitive Labor Market. In: L. Perry & M. Fellman, (Eds), *Antislavery Reconsidered:*

*New Perspectives on the Abolitionists* (Baton Rouge & London: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), pp. 204, 211.

94. This Puritanism, in fact, is no doubt the source of Phillips's casual unconcern about the risk of poverty when wages fall, since Phillips, like Malthus sees poverty in a benign light: "Poverty, wholesome poverty, is no unmixed evil; it is the spur that often wins the race; it is the trial that calls out, like fire, all the deep qualities of a man's nature." Wendell Phillips, "A Metropolitan Police," cited by Glickstein, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

95. This article was first cited, to my knowledge, by Herman Schlüter, *op. cit.*, pp. 40–41; it was subsequently quoted by many others, including Bernard Mandel, *Labor: Free and Slave* (New York: Associated Authors, 1955), p. 92, and Eric Foner, "Abolitionism and the Labor Movement in Antebellum America," in Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher, eds., *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey* (Folkestone and Kent, England: William Dawson & Sons, 1980), p. 25.

96. *The Liberator*, January 29, 1831, cited by Schlüter, *op. cit.*, pp. 43–44.

97. See the remarks by West and Garrison in Eric Foner, *op. cit.*, pp. 264–265. West's comment is also cited by Schlüter, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

98. Evans, "To Gerrit Smith," in Foner and Shapiro, p. 191; Schlüter, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

99. Eric Foner, for example, cites the New York abolitionist William Jay's opinion about the fate of the freed Black slave: "He is free, and his own master, and can ask for no more. Yet he is, in fact, for a time, absolutely dependent on his late owner. He can look to no other person for food to eat, clothes to put on, or house to shelter him. . . . [He is required to work], but labor is no longer the badge of his servitude and the consummation of his misery, for it is *voluntary* . . . . For the first time in his life he is party to a contract . . . . In the course of time, the value of negro labor, like all other vendible commodities, will be regulated by supply and demand." Foner is impressed by the looseness of Jay's "use of the word 'voluntary' to describe the labor of an individual who owns nothing and is 'absolutely dependent' on his employer. To the labor movement," Foner concludes, "Jay's description of emancipation would qualify as a classic instance of wage slavery; to Jay, it was an economic definition of freedom." See Foner, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

100. One of Marx's closest associates, Weydemeyer, became a Union general. Another kindred spirit, Adolf Douai, whom Marx later asked to translate *Capital* into English, was the editor of the fiercely antislavery *San Antonio Zeitung* from 1854 to 1857. And even Marx's rivals rose to prominence in this movement, including, e.g. Karl Heinzen, whom Marx had attacked in a powerful essay on "Moralizing Criticism and the Criticism of Morality." For details on Heinzen (and to a lesser extent Douai), see Carl Wittke, *Against the Current* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), *passim*.

101. Schlüter quotes extensively from what he refers to as Greeley's "celebrated definition of slavery," which appeared in a letter Greeley wrote in 1845 in response to an invitation to participate in an antislavery convention in Cincinnati (*op. cit.*, p. 51). This letter is now reproduced in full in Philip Foner and Herbert Shapiro, Eds, *Northern Labor and Antislavery: A Documentary History* (Westport & London: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp 127f. "I understand by slavery," Greeley explained, "that condition in which one human being exists mainly as a convenience for other human beings . . . . In short, wherever service is rendered from one human being to another, on a footing of one-sided and not of mutual obligation . . . but of authority, social ascendancy and power over subsistence on the one hand, and of necessity, servility and degradation on the other – there, in my view, is slavery." He went on: "You will readily understand, there-

fore, that, if I regard your enterprise with less absorbing interest than you do, it is not that I deem slavery a less, but a greater evil. If I am less troubled concerning the slavery prevalent in Charleston or New Orleans, it is because I see so much slavery in New York, which appears to claim my first efforts." It was, perhaps, no coincidence that Gerrit Smith rose at the convention to indict Greeley for "erroneous views, with which he had no sympathy" (cited by Greeley in a subsequent rejoinder, in Foner and Shapiro, Eds, p. 134). A day later a more detailed reply came from an antislavery paper, the *Morning Herald*, which editorialized: "Now, what is the oppression of the free workingman? Grant that he is obliged to labor hard, labor long; still, he labors, to provide himself a subsistence, to rear a family, to supply himself and them with the means of self-improvement. He is under no physical coercion, and thus escapes essential and perpetual degradation. He labor from *motives*, peculiar to an intelligent being – in accordance with laws, stamped upon his spiritual being . . ." (emphasis in the original; see Foner & Shapiro, p. 131).

102. Karl Marx, Results of the Immediate Process of Production. In: K. Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. 1: The Production Process of Capital*, translated by Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage; Middlesex: Penguin in association with New Left Books, 1976), p. 1033. First published in 1867. This monograph, usually referred to as "the *Resultate*," appears to have been conceived as the opening chapter of Vol. 2 of *Capital*, but Engels omitted it, for reasons unknown. Although it is one of Marx's seminal texts, the *Resultate* has received remarkably little attention. More than a decade after it was first published in English, the translator reported that virtually no one had yet mentioned it in print. (Private communication from Rodney Livingstone.)

103. *Capital*, op. cit., pp. 365–366. Marx adds to this: "In the same manner, the *Standard*, a Tory paper, delivered a rebuke to the Rev. [Christopher] Newman Hall, [a Congregationalist minister]: 'He excommunicated the slave owners, but prays with the fine folk who, without remorse, make the omnibus drivers and conductors of London, etc., work 16 hours a day for the wages of a dog' (*Standard*, 15 August 1863)." This feigned expression of moral outrage, which is quite similar in substance to the so-called Williams Thesis, is plainly viewed by Marx as an unsubtle effort to defame the abolitionists. They may have had feet of clay in some respects, but they were undeniably on the side of the angels in what Marx called "the one great event of contemporary history, the American Civil War." Carlyle, he adds, was on the other side, which he demonstrated, in part, by cynically reducing the Civil War "to this level, that the Peter of the North wants to break the head of the Paul of the South with all his might, because the Peter of the North hires his labour by the day, and the Paul of the South hires his 'for life' ('Ilias American in Nuce,' *Macmillan's Magazine*, August 1863)." The "kernel" of this "Tory sympathy for the urban workers – not, by God, for the rural workers!" – is perfectly plain, Marx says: "slavery!" (all quotes from *Capital*, p. 366).

104. Fitzhugh made the denunciation of wage slavery a fine art, as one ingredient in a sustained apology for the allegedly idyllic patriarchy of the slave South. See, e.g. the excellent analysis by Eugene Genovese in "The Logical Outcome of the Slaveholders' Philosophy," Part Two of Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), which first appeared in 1969. Genovese shows very clearly that Harvey Wish was mistaken to believe that Fitzhugh's views resembled or echoed Marx's. For details on the views of other American proslavery apologists, see Bernard Mandel, op. cit., pp. 95–110. Marcus Cunliffe, meanwhile, contributes a set of interesting reflections on the Anglo-American rivalry which, he believes, led many

early critics of “the White Slave Trade” to regard wage-slavery as something peculiarly British. See Cunliffe, *Chattel Slavery and Wage Slavery: The Anglo-American Context, 1830–1860* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1979).

105. *Capital*, p. 552.

106. *Capital*, p. 553.

107. *Capital*, p. 553, n. 11. Marx often referred to the Civil War as either ‘the Slave-Holder’s Rebellion’ or (more positively) ‘the American Anti-Slavery War’

108. Davis, “Reflections,” p. 165.

109. Lettson to Rush, July 15, 1787, cited in Davis, “Problem,” p. 63.

110. Greeley, in Foner and Shapiro, op. cit., p. 128; also cited by Schlüter, p. 53.

111. G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World, from the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 112. This remark appears in a brief but excellent general discussion of Marx’s views on free and unfree labor, which Ste. Croix greatly extends vis-à-vis the contrast between the gentleman who is free in the full sense, *eleutheros*, and the contrasting *aneleutheros*, one “who works for another’s benefit.” The latter category clearly encompasses hired as well as slave labor.

112. This, then, is the form of “exploitation” specific to capitalist class relations, since, according to Marx, exploitation is the extraction of surplus labor from a laborer – whether slave, serf or proletarian – by a master. Capitalism, Marx says, is simply the latest of a long series of modes of exploitation. “Capital,” as he explains in an important discussion in *Capital*, “did not invent surplus labor. Wherever a part of society possesses the monopoly of the means of production, the worker, free or unfree, must add to the labour-time necessary for his own maintenance an extra quantity of labour-time in order to produce the means of subsistence for the owner of the means of production, whether this proprietor be an Athenian *kalos kagathon*, an Etruscan theocrat, a *civis romanus*, a Norman baron, an American slave-owner, a Wallachian boyar, a modern landlord or a capitalist.” *Capital*, Vol. 1, op. cit., pp. 344–345.

113. Marx, “Value, Price and Profit,” in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works, Vol. 20: 1864–1868* (New York: International Publishers, 1985), p. 132 (emphasis in the original). Marx was responding in this lecture to the arguments of a fellow General Council member, the carpenter John Weston, whose views, Marx felt, were marked by precisely the illusions he sought to oppose in his own reply.

114. *Ibid.*, p. 132 (my emphasis). The phrase “immediately perceptible” appears in a parallel presentation of this same argument in Vol. 1 of *Capital*, p. 345.

115. “In slave labour,” Marx reiterates, “even the part of the working day in which the slave is only replacing the value of his own means of subsistence, in which he therefore actually works for himself alone, appears as labour for his master. All his labour appears as unpaid labour.” *Capital*, p. 680.

116. *Capital*, p. 365.

117. *Capital*, p. 680, n. 8 (my emphasis).

118. *Capital*, p. 680, n. 8.

119. *Capital*, p. 376, n. 72. Similarly, Marx underscores the “stoical peace of mind with which the political economist regards the most shameless violation of the ‘sacred rights of property’ and the grossest acts of violence against persons, as soon as they are necessary in order to lay the foundations of the capitalist mode of production.” This serenity, Marx says, is epitomized, e.g. “by Sir F. M. Eden, who is, moreover, Tory and ‘philanthropic . . .’” *Ibid.*, p. 889.



120. *Capital*, pp. 917–918. “Some decades later, the colonial system took its revenge on the descendants of the pious pilgrim fathers, who had grown seditious in the meantime. At English instigation, and for English money, they were tomahawked by the redskins.” For a particularly evocative account of the cultural logic which led the Puritans of Massachusetts to radically demonize the Lenape and other neighboring Indian peoples, see Richard Slotkin, “The Hunting of the Beast,” in Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1660–1860* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973).

121. In fact, Marx cites the very same passage that Davis reproduces, although Marx quotes a different edition of Townsend’s tract (the 1817 edition). Marx was also more interested in Townsend’s place in the history of ideas. Briefly, he believed that Townsend had borrowed his leading ideas about slavery from the great but neglected political economist Sir James Steuart, Adam Smith’s main theoretical opponent, and that Malthus later “plagiarized” not only Steuart, but Townsend as well. See *Capital*, pp. 472–473, n. 27; 766–767; 800.

122. See Marx, “Results of the Immediate Process of Production,” op. cit., pp. 1026–1034.

123. *Capital*, pp. 345–346; the distinction between “veiled” and “unqualified” slavery appears in a famous line where Marx says that “the veiled slavery of the wage-labourers of Europe needed the unqualified slavery of the New World as its pedestal.” *Capital*, p. 925.

124. “Value, Price and Profit,” op. cit., pp. 132–133.

125. *Capital*, p. 680 (my emphasis).

126. *Capital*, p. 414.

127. The founding meeting of the IWA was held on September 28, 1864; the first meeting of the General Council was convened on October 5, 1864; and Marx’s address “To Abraham Lincoln” was unanimously endorsed at the General Council meeting of November 29, 1864. For full documentation of the activities of the IWA in this period, see *The General Council of the First International, 1864–1866: Minutes*, edited by Molly Pearlman and Lydia Belyakova (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974).

128. *Ibid.*, p. 52; and see also Marx and Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 20: 1864–1868* (New York: International Publishers, 1985), p. 19, where this address is reprinted with slight emendations. Marx’s quotations are from a speech by the Vice-President of the Confederacy, Alexander Stephens, which Greeley’s *New York Daily Tribune* reported on March 27, 1861.

129. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

130. Marx adds: “At the same time [the beginning of September 1866], the Congress of the International Working Men’s Association, held at Geneva, passed the following resolution, proposed by the London General Council: ‘We declare that the limitation of the working day is a preliminary condition without which all further attempts are improvement and emancipation must prove abortive . . . the Congress proposes eight hours as the legal limit of the working day.’” *Capital*, pp. 414–415. Marx was himself the author of this IWA resolution.

131. *Capital*, pp. 414–415. “In the place of the pompous catalogue of the ‘inalienable rights of man’ there steps the modest Magna Carta of the legally limited working day, which at last makes clear ‘when the time which the worker sells is ended, and when his own begins.’ *Quantum mutatus ab illo!*” *Ibid.*, p. 416. The line about “muscles, sinews, and drops of blood” is from Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in*

England, 1845. The line in Latin is from Virgil's *Aeneid*, and means: "What a great change from that time." The point about clearly demarcating the end of the workday is quoted from the *Reports of the Factory Inspectors . . . 31 October 1859*, p. 47. Meanwhile, it should be plain that shedding light on the limitation of the workday in this way leaves untouched the greater mystery of the division of the workday itself – into paid and unpaid labor.

132. Wendell Phillips, cited by Mandel, op. cit., p. 204, and paraphrased by Haskell, "Humanitarianism: 2," pp. 148–149, n. 23.

133. Davis, "Problem," p. 25.

134. Senator Albert Beveridge, as cited on p. 65 of Viviana Zelizer's *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1985). This book will hereafter be cited as "Zelizer."

135. Felix Adler, cited by Zelizer, p. 70.

136. Marian Delcomyn, writing in 1917, cited by Zelizer, p. 71.

137. Zelizer, p. 62. She cites Peter Osterman, Allen Sanderson and Clark Nardinelli as leading representatives of this macro-economic perspective.

138. Zelizer, p. 57. The phrase "moral revolution" is from a 1907 report by A. J. McKelway.

139. Quadagno and Knapp, op. cit., p. 488.

# IDEOLOGY AFTER THE MILLENNIUM: PROBLEMS OF LEGITIMATION IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

Richard Harvey Brown

## INTRODUCTION

The very bureaucratic controls, market mechanisms, and media-made consumption that foster the success of America's postindustrial economy have undermined moral authority and legitimacy in society. Thus the means of achieving material comfort and a sense of national power have lessened civic participation and moral surety in everyday life (Schaar, 1981). Many scholars and critics have noted tensions between the political economy and its ethical legitimation, as well as contradictions *within* the discourse of legitimation. Indeed, the fragmentation of public life into separate specialized spheres (such as the professional, the educational, or the religious) has its counterpart in a fragmentation of the concept of legitimacy itself (MacIntyre, 1981, 1988; Heller, 1987; Stanley, 1981). Humpty Dumpty has fallen off the wall and broken into many pieces.

In the United States and other societies, the ethical link between the exercise of power and people's willing acceptance of it is provided by a body of moral constructs that impose a seemingly universalistic and invariant framework upon individual or collective rights and obligations. Legitimacy is such

---

**Bringing Capitalism Back for Critique by Social Theory, Volume 21, pages 185–232.**  
Copyright © 2002 by Elsevier Science Ltd.  
All rights of reproduction in any form reserved.  
ISBN: 0-7623-0762-5

a moral framework that has broad consensus and revolves around the right or authority to rule (Freidrich, 1963, p. 233).

Insofar as the polity is seen as the arena for the moral development of the person as a citizen, the concept of legitimacy is political in the classical sense. That is, it refers not only to individual roles and performances, and not only to the obligations and privileges of the public authorities that adjudicate them, but also the character of being human in that society.

Although the idea of legitimacy implies the existence of a moral order that authorizes conduct of both citizens and the State, this system also authorizes actions by agencies or institutions that mediate between the two. One example of this is the regulation of family relations. Both public and religious authorities of America (and of Western Europe) have claimed and exercised a legitimate role in establishing and enforcing status distinctions between a legitimate wife and a common law wife or concubine. A complementary distinction is that between the testamentary rights and legal obligations of legitimate as opposed to illegitimate children (that is, those born of incestuous, adulterous, or otherwise socially unacceptable unions). By their laws and doctrinally-based pronouncements, legislators and clergymen sought to limit the range of possible domestic groups and to encourage the perpetuation of specific forms of kinship and styles of familial interaction. Thus the authority of the State realizes itself through various institutions in the legitimate regulation of everyday life and in the normative obligation of citizens to respect this regulation.

While many Americans are "anti-government" in a general way, few are aware of the underlying sources of such sentiments. They not only suspect that others and perhaps themselves have lost their commitment to the general norms of moral conduct and the general welfare; they also are confronted with conflicting definitions of what this welfare and conduct entail. Yet, more has been said bemoaning the crisis of legitimacy than analyzing it. Hence, our purpose in this chapter is to show how the current crisis results from an interplay of structural and cultural forces. Though rooted in American history, these forces also are those of a highly rationalized, advanced capitalist society.

Conflicts between different definitions of legitimacy correspond to conflicts between different ideologically-oriented groups. The Right decries permissiveness, advocates a return to traditional values, and reaffirms law and order. The Left, such as it is, points to social inequities, abuses of law, and situations of injustice. And, of course, there are a variety of hues and cries beside these two. Politicians and entrepreneurs claim that ends justify means, while judges and bureaucrats insist that respect for procedures is what counts. Likewise, the rationalistic authority of experts, the traditional authority of religious figures, and the charismatic authority of celebrities often conflict with each other. Not only do

diverse groups project differing and often antagonistic conceptions of legitimacy, each reflecting its social position and interests, but these conflicts are often internalized within individuals, most of whom are members of, or dependent on, more than one such group.

The definition of legitimacy that each social group holds also is subject to internal contradictions. For example, many conservatives are quick to castigate intervention by the federal government, even as they advocate the control of abortion or the inclusion of prayer by public authorities. Among liberals, commitment to equality (as for women) is paired with faith in liberty (as for gays and lesbians), with little awareness of the incompatibilities that this entails.

Americans historically have used various means to deal with political and ideological threats. These include differences in the outlooks and interests of distinct classes, encouraging mass solidarity through fear of an external or internal enemy (the evil empire, the drug cartels, minorities of color), by emphasizing the absolute economic gains of almost all groups, and by including previously marginalized elements (such as women, blacks, or homosexuals) into mainstream political processes (Edsall & Edsall, 1991). In previous decades, these strategies reduced conflict mainly because overall economic expansion masked differences in the gains achieved by distinct groups. These strategies became less effective since about 1970, however, with greater economic globalization and increased class polarization. Policies of affirmative action for women and minorities offer a case in point. Not only do these policies seem at odds with the universalistic values underlying the U.S. Constitution, but they also have aggravated inter-ethnic tensions, especially between college bound blacks and working class whites.

## **THE VARIETY OF SYMPTOMS**

Symptoms of the crisis of legitimacy in American society are many (for examples see Beniger, 1986; Blumenberg, 1983; Crozier, 1984; Connolly, 1987; Habermas, 1975; Kleinberg, 1973; Offe, 1984; Schaar, 1981; Vidich, 1991; Wolfe, 1977). Trust in public institutions has eroded (Caplow et al., 1991); legal action has become a first not a last resort in settling disputes; millionaires and millennialists join forces in railing against all forms of government; private militias and loners destroy people and federal buildings; and even ordinary persons frequently take the law into their own hands. Some investors ruined by stockmarket downturns shot their brokers, just as farmers bankrupted by high mortgage rates have killed their bankers. Mark Burton, a stock trader upset about investment losses, killed himself after shooting more than a dozen office workers (*Washington Post*, 30 July 1999). In destroying an airborne plane and

killing all of its passengers, another man who had been dismissed from the airline showed, as he put it, the same lack of pity that caused his dismissal. Disaffected students at Columbine and other high schools murder their classmates with surprising frequency and for little apparent reason. Whether their activities involve legal or illegal maneuvers, wholesale killing, or silent withdrawal, more people want to assert their power against social institutions they no longer deem legitimate.

The crisis of legitimacy is also evident in the decline in the trust inspired by public figures. Voter registration and turnout in America are the lowest of any industrial nation, and those who do vote often reject incumbent administrations. Opinion polls report people's low esteem for key institutions and leaders. This declining respect for the State parallels not only the corruption of elected officials but, more important, the increase in conduct that is not illegal but which is viewed by many as immoral.

Moreover, with the expansion and bureaucratization of the corporate State, political leaders increasingly become functionaries for their financial sponsors, with few personal moral obligations. This erodes political legitimacy as well as the notion of personal honor. For example, during the presidency of Ronald Reagan, both Secretary of State Schultz and Secretary of Defense Weinberger claimed to have warned their President about the violations of law then being perpetrated by his National Security Adviser. Yet, even though the President did nothing to deal with their objections, they failed to speak out publicly or to resign in the name of principle because, as each said, they had a job to do. Their role as efficient functionaries overtook their sense of duty as citizens.

Such instances suggest that contradictions in core myths and values of Americans have reached a critical threshold. These values include the inviolability of private property and the equal rights and access to opportunity. They include the effective management of public affairs and also a highly decentralized and hence often ineffective government. They include individual self-direction as well as respect for expert knowledge. Right to life but also right to guns, freedom of speech but also the gender neutral workplace. The conflicts of these commitments are amplified by political decentralization and the lack of majesty of the State. The very notion of legitimacy is in jeopardy whenever core myths of the society can no longer mask an ongoing fragmentation of cultural groups, a polarization of economic classes, and the gulf between the hyper-rationalized system and the meanings that people cling to in their everyday lives.

In this chapter we explore sources of problems and contradictions of legitimacy in the United States. These include the divided and decentralized authority of the State, rapid rates of social and technical innovation, the tension between tradition, religion and precedent against the American celebration of

the new, the contradiction between capitalism and democracy, the rise of technicism as a general ideology or habit of mind, tensions between pluralism, due process, and the celebration of results, and the role of public opinion and media images.

## CONSTITUTIONAL CONTRADICTIONS AND TENSIONS IN LEGITIMACY

The creators of the American Constitution feared despotism in both its democratic and monarchical forms. They tended, like most Americans then and today, to be suspicious of institutional power in principle. "Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness," wrote Thomas Paine in *Common Sense*. James Madison wrote *Federalist* Paper No.10 to show the historical importance of property. Madison clearly wanted to avoid rule by the majority and to establish a republic governed by the rich. Yet Madison also wanted to avoid concentrations of power. In *Federalist* No.51, he argued that "ambition must be made to counteract ambition . . . . The great security against a gradual concentration of the several powers in the same department, consists in giving to those who administer each department the necessary constitutional means and personal motives to resist encroachments of the others. The remedy . . . is to divide the legislature into different branches; and to render them . . . as little connected with each other as the nature of their common functions and their common dependence on society will admit." George Washington echoes these sentiments in his farewell address (written mostly by Hamilton): "The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all departments in one, and thus to create whatever form the government, a real despotism." The philosopher Quentin Skinner (1998) echoes these arguments today. "The state has a duty not merely to liberate its citizens from . . . personal exploitation but to prevent its own agents . . . from behaving arbitrarily in the course of imposing the rules that govern our common life." Similarly, what Edmund Burke (quoted by Epstein, 1996, p. 30) said of the American colonists is no less true of Americans today: the love of liberty was "fixed and attached on this specific point of taxing," over which the "great contests for freedom" had been fought "from the earliest times."

These ideas were central to the political culture of the early United States, and they have persisted throughout American history in large part because they were directly written into the U.S. Constitution. Although the federal government has grown immensely in power and authority, the separation of powers remains between the main branches of government, and policymaking continues to be shared between the national and regional authorities. The sovereignty of

particular states was of course reinforced by the differences between the North and the South; but even after the defeat of the South in the Civil War and its relative integration with the rest of the country after 1966 when desegregation, air-conditioning, and manufacturing arrived to the Southern states, this relative autonomy of the states granted by the Constitution continues. For example, state legislatures rather than Congress continue to define the most significant components of legal identity, such as residence, civil status, and vital statistics.

This system of decentralization and separation of powers has had a number of interrelated consequences for American culture and political life. These include the relative weakness of American political parties and a corresponding civic activism through local associations, social movements, and interest groups; a lack of accountability of government; a weakness or even incompetence of government in accomplishing many tasks; and a general anti-government attitude among the general public.

The variability of state laws (as well as the cultural diversity of the population) encouraged an emphasis on procedure or formal over substantive values. Divided power and decentralization of government may bring justice closer to where interactions take place, foster cultural diversity, and facilitate social experiments. But it also makes it difficult to hold any particular unit or person accountable, for no one is wholly responsible. Moreover, by guaranteeing incapacities of each unit in the system, the division of powers also reinforces negative attitudes toward government in general. Where government is centralized, dissatisfaction will more likely be directed toward the incumbent administration. Where government is decentralized and therefore inherently less competent, dissatisfaction is more likely to be directed at government itself (Barber, 1983; Levi, 1998). This was expressed recently by an automobile mechanic in Georgia (quoted by Hodgson, 1992): "I don't intend to vote for anyone up in Washington again, and I'll tell ya why. When I get to thinking about how hard I work, and how damn greasy I get, and I start thinking about how much you-all take out of my paycheck for taxes and all, an I see those people setting on their porches spending my money, why I get so damn mad I just say to myself, 'I ain't never going to vote for them sons-of-bitches again.'" The fact that this man's payroll taxes had been raised to the advantage of the already wealthy, and not front porch sitters, had little to do with it.

Political parties have been weak in America compared to their European counterparts, mainly because they are much less able to deliver the goods to those who might support them. In most European systems, the head of the victorious political party – that is, the party which wins a controlling number of legislative seats in Parliament, becomes the President or Prime Minister and selects his or her cabinet ministers from winners of other legislative seats. By



contrast, in the United States, the two legislative houses are strictly separated from the executive branch, and many positions and decisions remain not only with the federal executive but also with the particular states. This diffuses power enormously, as was intended by the Founders, and also makes it much more difficult for national parties to be politically effective. Similarly, the absence of unitary sovereignty makes it harder for political parties to offer a real choice of candidates who might effect significant change if elected (Gerring, 1998, p. 12).

Partly because of this, Americans have turned historically to non-party and non-governmental civic activism. Since at least the early 1800s, America's vibrant civic life was said to make it unique. Indeed, the United States came to be known as "a nation of joiners." Yet this hallmark of American democracy can itself be interpreted as a product of weak government and weak parties. Civic actions such as volunteer work for community organizations or interest groups, joining social movements, helping in registration and get-out-the-vote drives, or protesting in the streets, all are more important if government is weak. Likewise, pressure groups are especially visible in the United States, partly because they can "exploit the multiplicity of points of access characteristic of American government – the presidency, the bureaucracy, both houses of Congress, the powerful congressional committees, the judiciary and state and local government" (Richardson, 1993).

The weakness of parties also partly explains why politics in America is considerably more "pragmatic" and less "ideological" than in Europe. In contrast to the United States, strong-party systems evidently mobilize many more citizens in political life through the parties than weak-party systems, but such involvements are not likely to be perceived as the engagements of *individual citizens* – the public-spirited philosophy of liberalism. Rather, citizens will perceive themselves as partisans of a particular philosophy, and a particular political organization. It is not, therefore, to an abstract notion of 'citizenship' that such activists will appeal, but rather to ideologies. 'I am a socialist/conservative, therefore I act' " (*Economist*, 21 August 1999, pp. 44–45).

None of this means that pressure groups are less important in European democracies, but only that they exercise their influence more *within* the party apparatuses rather than outside them where they, perforce, are more visible as pressure groups rather than parties. In both cases, of course, pressure groups tend to encourage governments to do more than it can do well, and to exacerbate inequalities because the influence to the rich and powerful is vastly disproportionate to their actual numbers.

The strong bias against democratic majorities that the Founders built into the American political system also makes it easier for privileged minorities to block

changes than for majorities to enact them. Thus, the system strongly favors the status quo against reform. "What the framers did in effect was to hand out extra chips in the game of politics to people who are already advantaged, while they handicapped the disadvantaged who would like to change the status quo" (Dahl, 1977). In this circumstance, the victory of any majority of coalition or democratic reformers depends on the support of a President so strong that he or she would have nearly despotic power.

The decentralized structure of American political and judiciary institutions also desacralizes the universality that is central to the notion of legitimacy (Litowitz, 1997). The enormous variations in marriage, divorce, or inheritance laws across the nation, for example, and their apparently random distribution, lowers the predictability of any judicial intervention in familial relations. Moreover, the sovereignty of each state with regard to such issues enables spouses or parents to push their own interests at the expense of their relatives by moving to a more favorable jurisdiction. While Reno's fame comes from divorce as much from gambling, its divorce decrees can be readily contested outside of Nevada. Similarly, the approval of marriages of gay or lesbian couples by the state of Vermont in 2000 elicited bans against recognizing such marriages in a number of other states. In short, high degrees of individual mobility and legal localism not only invite instability of conjugal bonds, but also encourage disrespect for governmental decrees.

The relegation of norms concerning family and marriage to the private sphere solves little, however, because there are ambiguities in the conception of privacy itself. While the term refers to the sanctity of domestic relations, as well as to ones body and ones home, it also evokes the absolute property rights for individuals to "use, enjoy, and dispose of" what they own. In other words, the concept of privacy symbolizes both the privileges of intimate relations against outside intrusions, and the exclusive rights of owners over their assets. Thus the private rights and discretion of the family against the State or the public sphere is easily extended to the private rights and discretion of the individual spouse or child against the family itself. Similarly, the competitive environment of "private" firms makes openness anathema, even as these same firms maintain comprehensive information and invade the homes of "private" individuals.

The decentralized and multi-layered governmental apparatus of the United States also tends to blur boundaries between public and private. The multiplicity of jurisdictions, each with its own laws and precedents, undermines people's commitment to more universal principles and, thereby, the legitimacy of the State as the bearer or enforcer of such principles. For example, despite recurrent confirmations of the right to privacy, the State of Connecticut sought to legislate bedroom conduct when it made the use of condoms by married

couples a criminal offense. Elsewhere, the states permitted information to enter the public domain even though it had been collected on a private person for private reasons. In the litigation over Baby M, for example, the judge allowed the defendant's lawyer to make public the tapes of telephone conversations with the plaintiff which the defendant had recorded illegally. The use of Linda Tripp's secret recordings of Monica Lewinsky by Prosecutor Starr provides a similar example.

Further, it is unclear to most Americans whether the activities of private individuals should be bound by the same principles as those regulating the conduct of public officials, who often have little or no private life of their own. In contrast to past eras when one spoke of legitimate children and legitimate wives in the same way that one evoked the legitimacy of the State, modern rhetorics imply either that legitimacy does not concern private lives or that different moral norms govern personal and public conduct.

Thus the decentralized form and banal status of the State causes confusion about the reciprocal obligations of citizens and public authorities. For example, Americans tend to confuse whistle blowing, muckraking, and informing. Even though whistle blowing involves telling taxpayers and officials about misuses of public funds or authority (Nelkin, 1984), whistle blowers are usually punished as informers. Thus, the individual who revealed that the Army paid an absurd price for ashtrays was banished professionally, whereas the youngster who gave away her parents for using dope was personally honored by President Reagan's wife.

The decentralization and variability of the American system also increases the number of constituencies to which political actors must respond, each with their own interests and conceptions of legitimacy. For example, is the legitimacy of judges based on their expert knowledge, the number of votes they have received, their exemplary moral character, or the political orientation of their voting records? Such tensions have been present since the first days of the Republic (Miller, 1965). For example, members of both the executive and legislative branches knew that the institution of slavery was threatening the legitimacy of the United States in the eyes of foreign powers, but they also knew that to campaign overtly for Abolition would jeopardize their careers and often their wealth. Further, while they all rejected the political and civil rights of slaves, they did not fight the decision taken by Southern political actors to count slaves as three fifths of normal citizens as a roundabout way of enhancing the political representation of slave States and of perpetuating their ability to limit federal authority.

Fears of conflict between legislative and executive branches of government or between State and federal authorities often invite arbitration by the judiciary partly because judges are either appointed or subject to longer electoral time-

tables and are therefore more resistant to the reprisals of public opinion. As an illustration, after World War Two, and especially after the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education* politicians at both state and federal levels understood that both *de jure* and *de facto* educational segregation were jeopardizing the legitimacy of American government. Knowing that direct action would hurt them politically, they left to federal judges the task of defining what school boards should do in order to ensure desegregation.

In sum, America's institutionally mandated system of checks and balances and decentralization has tended to weaken the State as the legitimate embodiment and effective executor of shared universal values. Instead, this system has engendered a skeptical, anti-government attitude among many Americans, weak parties and lack of governmental accountability, and the use of alternative means of political activism such as volunteering for community service, social movements, or interest group lobbying.

## SOCIAL AND TECHNICAL INNOVATIONS AND LEGITIMACY

Some weaknesses of legitimacy inhere in the Constitution of the United States. Others are products of the basic, defining orientations of modernity itself. These include rationality, the cult of efficiency and profit, ethical relativism, egalitarianism, secularism, and rapid rates of technical and social innovation.

Emile Durkheim showed that changes in social structure invite changes in the collective sense of moral bondedness and hence in the character of the law. Changes in social structure and in culture are not necessarily synchronized, however, and the resultant disruptions that Durkheim saw as transitional seem, instead, to be chronic conditions of societies with high rates of innovation. The faster these rates, the more likely there will be inconsistencies between institutional structures and their cultural and moral justifications. And given such inconsistencies, contradictions will appear between the legitimacy of innovations and the legitimacy of existing institutions and conduct.

For example, the globalization of commerce or the thinning of the ozone layer, like the conquest of space or the exploration of the deep seas, challenge principles of property and national sovereignty. Thus American authorities did not know how to respond when the debris of a Soviet satellite fell on American territory, when a French research team lifted parts of the sunken Titanic, or when other French researchers identified the wreckage of a Confederate battleship off the coast of Cherbourg. Similarly, bio-technological innovations expand the ways to mark or measure the exact beginnings and ends of human lives, thereby challenging existing definitions of human death and human rights. Such

technological revolutions create conflicts between the rights of comatose patients and their relatives, of mothers and their foetuses, or of an older recipient sibling and her younger donor sister who was conceived for the purpose of providing an organ for transplant. Such conflictual situations undermine the individual body as a sacred receptacle of inalienable natural rights, even as they fragment family solidarity as a moral basis of society.

Other social and technical changes, such as the AIDS epidemic or the inter-generational transmission of genetic defects caused by nuclear radiation may create uncertainties in social relations that cannot be resolved in terms of existing moral beliefs or legal precedents. In such contentious conditions, neither elected officials nor bureaucrats or judges can offer much reasoned ethical guidance, and there are no neutral or objective processes to rely upon because there is no consensus about what in these cases is neutral or objective.

Rapid change also accelerates the obsolescence of legal statuses, thereby undermining a sense of the permanent validity of the law. For example, in 1965 Congress excluded sexual deviants from visiting the United States, and stipulated that homosexuals were included in that category. But public norms have changed since then, and in 1979 the American Psychiatric Association stopped listing homosexuality as a psychiatric disorder. Bureaucrats in the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and federal judges watching over them, accordingly have made new law, granting admittance to avowed homosexuals (Inglehart, 1991, p. 1; see Reich, 1991, p. 40). True enough, laws may catch up with changing technologies, norms, or administrative practices, but time lags between changes in the law, new but still informal norms, and in people's actual practices, undermine the legitimacy of each of them. In short, technological innovations heighten the dilemma of deciding when to rely upon existing definitions of fairness or justice, and when to create new working concepts, thereby destabilizing the concept of legitimacy.

Threats to legitimacy also result from the greater the division of labor and social complexity of modernity, which makes it more likely that each sector will claim the preeminence of its own standards. For example, in the arts, norms of both propriety and property must be defined to guide and safeguard cultural production and use. The legitimacy of the relevant aesthetic and legal norms underpins artistic paradigms and conventions and insures the property rights of individuals with respect to cultural products (Becker, 1984; Brown, 1995; Clignet, 1985, 1990; Wolff, 1981). Whereas *propriety* is largely sanctioned by and within artistic communities, *property* is defined and controlled by public courts of law, and each of these may hold different conceptions of legitimacy. In other words, the authority of the artist or critic is pitted against that of the judge or the politician who claims to be the *vox populi*, speaking in the name

of laymen. This is evident in the debates concerning the conservation of buildings considered as historical landmarks by some and as urban decay by others (Thompson, 1979). Such debates refer to rules of aesthetic propriety, norms of historic significance, and laws regarding private property. Such diverse norms of legitimization also apply to new buildings that appear to some as challenging experiments and to others as visual pollution. The removal of Richard Serra's innovative artwork, *Tilted Arc*, in downtown New York, for example, pitted the public, in the form of the inhabitants of the immediate neighborhood, against the State, represented by its experts located far from the actual site (Merryman & Elsen, 1987).

Moreover, as each distinct sphere of activity – such as art, medicine, or education – develops its own specialized vocabulary and rationales, tradition becomes less useful as a guide in the face of rapid change. Thus the particular notions of legitimacy of each distinct sphere of activity gets further removed both from the others and from everyday conceptions of fair play or justice. This deficit of common sense encourages recourse to litigation and the proliferations of attorneys in the United States. Moreover, in their efforts at professionalization, and in response to the needs of efficiency, many law schools have sought to turn law into a formalistic technique. This too has widened the gap between official legal practices and private moral judgements. While the increasing incomprehensibility of the law to ordinary citizens enhances the need for lawyers and fortifies their claims to financial and symbolic privileges, it widens the gap between law and ethics. With the formalization of the law and the growth of legal actions and legal workers, justice tends to be reduced to legality, and whatever is not judged to be illegal by courts becomes therefore not unjust. Thus the law loses its legitimating function as the procedural embodiment of justice, and becomes instead a scholastic exercise in the occult or an arbitrary exercise of power that is largely monopolized by lawyers and their wealthy clients. In Habermas's terms, the system again takes over the lifeworld.

Increasing technological development and division of labor also accentuate geographic and social mobility and, hence, the flaccidity of social commitments. This in turn undermines the homogeneity and stability of lived moral frameworks and relativizes all of them. Thus, as Georg Simmel (1903) noted a century ago, social pathologies increase in the metropolis. Today, however, it is possible for many people in suburban or even rural areas to engage in varied and ephemeral experiences, at least in their personal lives, and then leave them as soon as their needs or curiosities are satisfied. This undermines the stability of the lifeworld and indirectly, the legitimacy of the social order which is supposed to secure and stabilize it. "Thus a paradoxical situation is created: the value of law has always depended on its stability and its ability to predict conformist

behavior” (Szabo, 1973, pp. 16–17). Yet when changes are too rapid the law is robbed of these essential attributes, because fast-changing conditions and conduct can hardly serve as bases for seemingly permanent legislation.

Indeed, with rapid technical and socio-economic changes the law becomes more reactive and more redundant. It is more reactive because it is more difficult for legislators to predict changes that will require new legislation as, for example, in the emergent areas of cybernetic or genetic technologies. Yet, because rapid change also accelerates the obsolescence of earlier legislation, the law paradoxically also comes to appear more redundant or irrelevant as, for example, legislation concerning technologies that are no longer much in use. Thus the law, and legitimation more generally, is often either outdated or too late.

As rapidly changing situations cause standards to seem *ad hoc* or arbitrary, these standards themselves appear relative and open to manipulation. Sometimes such effects of technological or social innovations on specific norms are counterbalanced by the use of cost-benefit calculations as a more general source of legitimation. But this implies that as everything has a cost it also has a price. Such a reduction of all values to money is a triumph of means over ends and, hence, a devaluation of moral ends in general. The generalization of the expression the “bottom line” epitomizes this expansion of market calculations at the expense of substantive values. Max Weber had seen the danger inherent in the generalized use of money as a standard means of evaluation. The expression “formal rationality” that he coined in this respect should be contrasted with the notion of “substantive rationality”. Parallel concepts are “procedural justice” usually understood as “due process” or correct legal procedure, as against “substantive justice” which refers to outcomes of legal proceedings that can be taken as just. Thus there emerges a large gap between legality (of procedures) and justice (of conditions or outcomes). Such gaps violate the moral bases of solidarity that, as Durkheim showed, must be prior to any effective democratic law. In such circumstances the legitimacy of the legal system, and of government in general, is subverted.

Something similar is occurring in the world of work. As technological change increases the division, temporal turnover, and geographic dispersion of labor, the product (the end) becomes more distant from the labor (the means) that achieved it. As the substantive purpose of people’s work becomes less visible, it becomes more difficult to reconcile the moral agency of the individual worker and the procedures of the overall system. The person (the worker) becomes a cog in an ever more complex machine. This erodes the links between personal decisions and collective moral life; in the work place, this is expressed in such sayings as “It’s just a job” or “I only work here,” connoting psychological and moral disengagement.

Theories of modernization assume the progressive rationalization of laws and legal procedures. One can imagine such an ideal improvement in the systemization of multiple and mutually exclusive legal customs, as with the Code of Napoleon in the nineteenth century. However otherwise desirable such rationalization might be, it also fosters new frameworks of meaning that not only threaten traditional views of the cultural, political, and moral orders, but also are often, paradoxically, inconsistent with each other (Litowitz, 1997). Indeed, one might say that the greater the pace of modern and especially postindustrial rationalization, the more it generates a postmodern culture that disturbs the normative bases for its own acceptance. In other words, even though rationalization can reinforce the stability of the system, it thereby limits the space and validity of agency in the lifeworld and thus deepens both anomie and alienation and reduces the system's legitimacy. Moreover, as separate spheres of the lifeworld – work, family, health – also get rationalized, these rationales may compete with each other. The profit rationality of the corporation, for example, might nullify the ethical rationality of friendships. As we shall later discuss, the shift toward enclave cultures, lifestyle groupings, cults, gated residential areas, and other communities of similarity appear to be a reaction to this. Though they do offer a partial solution, they also re-establish the problem – the distance between universalism and rationalization of the system, and the particularism of new enclave lifeworlds.

Whereas modern industrial societies justified themselves in terms of meta-narratives of progress, freedom, or a better material life, postmodern societies appears to lack an intrinsic justification. Their institutions come to be seen as wholly artificial, to be constructed and deconstructed at will. As the activities of technicist culture become more complex and specialized, and as rates of technical and social change accelerate, there is a growing sense that the late capitalist economy is at once inescapable, impenetrable, and irresistible. And, because of this, there is no close connection between what an individual actually does and the social structural forces that shape his or her life. Free human activity increasingly becomes a matter of adjustment, adaptation, or “personal growth” – all morally vacuous responses to situations that are often morally overpowering.

On the one hand, the world is more abstract and unreal because increasingly it becomes accessible only through abstract mathematics, technical symbols, or monitor screens. On the other hand, a new subjectivism pervades the realm of private existence. The private (and increasingly the public) realm is given over to personal feelings and expressions of emotion, which accounts for the tendencies to both psychological awareness and self-absorption. It was these qualities of both calculation and emotivism that characterized Bill Clinton's presidency,



accounting for its successes and enabling him to salvage it from self-created crises.

A telling example of systems rationalization and radical subjectivism is offered by the antecedents and aftermath of the explosion of the Challenger space shuttle on the chilly morning of January 28, 1986. Before the explosion, two engineers of the private firm that built the defective “o-ring” had opposed the launch because of the effects on the boosters of the unusually low temperature on the launch pad. The higher-ups in their firm and the authorities of the Space Agency invoked two managerial motives to overrule them, one fiscal, the other image. First, despite frequent and long delays in the execution of the program, the budget should not be overrun. The abstract definition of the fiscal year, and the Space Agency’s time tables that were built around it, stood against the concrete constraints of the weather. Second, accumulated delays could be interpreted as caused by mismanagement and could therefore jeopardize the further growth of the Agency and its private contractors.

The officials disregarded the warnings of the two engineers and the concrete risks of losing human lives, to say nothing of highly expensive equipment and highly trained personnel. Instead, they favored the abstract concerns of budgetary timetables and public relations. The final decision was taken after consultation with persons located far from the launch site itself, persons whose information therefore suffered from reality anemia. Further, the formal appearance of consensus carried more weight than the concrete conditions under which it was reached or the direct knowledge of the people at the actual site.

When the warnings given by the two engineers became known to the public, both were punished for having jeopardized the welfare of the company. Even though the sanctions taken against them were eventually abandoned, their respective careers after the catastrophe illustrate how objectivized rationality can co-opt subjectivized moral commitments. Apparently unable to cope with the tragedy, the first engineer asked for a long term sick leave and then sued his former employer for several million dollars for emotional damages. The guilt generated by an ineffectual protest became in effect another source of profit. The second engineer became the company’s official spokesman for all the improvements made on the o-rings since the ill-fated launch. His new role may be seen as a bribe he accepted from the firm as much as the result of remorse or of lessons belatedly learned.

In this instance, the bureaucratic system seemed to have a life of its own. The human purposes that the machines were designed to serve were forgotten, while the moral protest of two lone engineers was transformed into rationally calculable litigation or organizational advancement – personal gain on the one hand, corporate legitimation on the other. Worse still, the report of the

Presidential commission that investigated the disaster, led by William Rogers, as well as the comments on it by academics, emphasized the technical and procedural aspects of the incident. It thereby reproduced, rather than criticized or even noted, the hyper-rationalized discourse which underlay the failure of moral judgement that generated the disaster (Gross & Walzar, 1997). As distinctions between good and evil cease to be grounded in personal experience or ethical judgment, and instead are reified in electronically supported procedures or calculations, public actions become displays of either impersonal rational efficiency or moralistic posturing.

### **TRADITION, RELIGION, AND PRECEDENT AGAINST THE SECULAR THRILL OF THE NEW**

Americans conduct much of their activities through market exchanges, and they value both cultural pluralism and radical individualism and freedom. These attributes undermine any transcendental, or universal values that support social conformity. Instead, Americans govern themselves through non-traditional, rationalistic legal systems that are geared toward efficient system maintenance rather than toward the fostering of any general ideology or morality except, of course, a patriotic commitment to the "American way of life". Religion tends to be more private and removed from public life, which is largely secular. Indeed, religion may become secularized as a kind of morally driven social reformism or personal therapy or, failing these, an intense eschatological religiosity that sees itself as deeply estranged from the dominant secularized world.

The United States has always been this kind of society more than other nations. From the beginning Americans rebelled against authority in their flight from the Old World even as they affirmed the moral sanctity of their dream of a new one. The partly exiled populations of settlers and immigrants have oscillated between excessive doubts and unwarranted assertions about themselves, torn between forces that pulled them away from former homes or pushed them toward new horizons. The Puritans and Catholics of Britain nourished images of God and His grace unlike those preached by the official Church of England and that were adopted by the majority of their countryfolk and required by Britain's elites. Early immigrants felt relief and honor in avoiding the prosecution of the Crown and in bearing a just cause when they landed on American shores. The same tension between an older authority and a newer mission also plagued last born children of mighty families who were unable to gain wealth within European rules of inheritance, and so sought new wealth by new means in America. In addition, early American society was a plurality of

religiously distinct cultures, many of which conceived of themselves as voluntary legal associations, such as that posited in the Mayflower Compact. The function of religion as a source of legitimacy was undermined, however, by the multiplicity of zealotries that have been typical of American religion since the earliest days of colonization (Eitzen & Timmer, 1985, p. 521). And with a plurality of competing sectarian faiths, after a time the emerging public sphere became a religiously neutral ground not dominated by any particular religious dogma.

In brief, the very circumstances of the founding of the United States, and the symbolic parricide by those Americans who created the Republic, suggest why, from the outset, successive waves of settlers were tempted to define legitimacy in terms different from those prevailing in their original cultures (Miller, 1965; Ditz, 1986). The foundation of America thereby established a tradition of anti-tradition, a legitimacy based on challenges to earlier forms of legitimation. This, along with American pluralism, individualism and secular democracy, fostered the emergence of rationality, efficiency, newness, and profitability as criteria of the moral validity of practices and beliefs, since these appear to be independent of any specific religion, culture, or national tradition.

Yet the boundaries between the profane and the sacred, or between the human and the divine, are more ambiguous than official rhetorics induce us to believe. The American Republic has always overtly separated the State and the Church. But the official proclamation of Thanksgiving by the President, the addition of the words "under God" to the pledge of allegiance, the references to God on currency and in civic, political, and academic rituals, the fact that oaths are taken on the Bible, the recurrence of religiously motivated movements of moral and social reform, and the diffuse religiosity of the American populace, all suggest that the secular State continues to derive part of its legitimacy from religious feelings that are not officially approved. Religion also manifests itself in public life in smaller ways, as when the two teams competing in the Super-Bowl pray jointly before the game, or in the official rituals of Christmas.

Despite such residues of religiosity, the dominant American tendency towards secular politics and government undermines any divine legitimation of official power, or even of the ability to blame God for human failings. Secularism, part of which Max Weber called disenchantment, came with the rationalization of society and was justified as bringing increased freedom, affluence, and social justice. Without God to blame for persisting poverty, misery, and injustice, however, the fault could only be attributed to people and their institutions. "If equality, rights, and privileges were man's making, not God's, then all men were entitled to these social rights" (Bensman, 1988, p. 17). Thus, the new secular dispensation has generated a demand for "responsible" or

“effective” leadership, accountable to an historically new political entity – the people.

Yet this presented new and more complex problems of legitimation. The Enlightenment, having achieved a full, if distorted, rationalization of society, now turned back on itself by undermining the very principles that once sustained the legitimacy of the modern state. One example of the subversion of legitimacy through rationalization is the rise of social welfare programs, mainly during the Depression, to help restart the economy, smooth out the ups and downs of the business cycle, and placate the proletariat. While such welfare programs partly achieved their purposes they also imposed more burdens on democracy. First, the passage of welfare legislation required a strong and energetic president who could expand and concentrate all the political resources of his office. Indeed, one could say that the imperial presidency began not with Andrew Jackson or with Richard Nixon but with Franklin Roosevelt. Roosevelt’s reformist presidency disarmed those who otherwise would have been most opposed to the undemocratic concentration of power that was needed to enact those reforms. The welfare state also needed extensive governmental bureaucracies to be effectively implemented, and these new agencies further extended the president’s power to persuade, manipulate, or coerce. Moreover, the expanded bureaucracies are hierarchic and controlling and, as such, inherently undemocratic in relations with both their members and their clients (Dahl, 1977).

As long as conceptions of traditional moral opinion and officially administered justice are in close correspondence, there is no crisis or fragmentation of legitimacy. The problem arises when morality, *môres*, and law are divided. In such a circumstance, there is little agreement on how ethics and *môres* can be translated into legislation that people accept as morally right. This is the case in contemporary America not only for so-called moral crimes, such as President Clinton’s peccadilloes, but also increasingly for property crimes, as seen in debates over the Internet, tariffs on foreign content, or intellectual property. Moral and legal boundaries become unclear even in cases of violent crimes, as in the case of date rape or recovered memories of childhood incest. “Victimless” crimes are even more morally ambiguous, but so are “perpetratorless” crimes such as environmental pollution, faulty product design, or dangerous foods and drugs, where it is extremely difficult to identify culpable individual actors. Terrorism as crime or as political act is also ambiguous, as is contemporary war itself, where over 80% of casualties are civilians. In all such cases, traditional standards of legitimacy are inadequate, and each of the alternate standards proffered renders the others less believable.

Like other peoples, Americans endow particular aspects of their past with a legitimating power. At the extreme, *any* contemporary interpretation is seen as

a deviation from an original Sacred Truth. Salvation is thought to require submission to the immutable power of the original political or religious text. For Americans these texts are the founding documents of their nation and its institutions. Thus the strict constructionist approach to the Constitution illustrates the appeal to tradition or precedents. For strict constructionists, all interpretations of the Constitution are suspect unless they focus on what the text “actually says”. The ensuing debates are practical as well as doctrinal. For example, appointments or elections to judgeships have been blocked by conflicts over whether the right to privacy is legally protected even though it is not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution, or whether the constitutional amendment barring the police from entering private homes without warrants includes protection from electronic surveillance.

In the political or legal arenas, however, Americans have encountered difficulties that often are alien to other peoples. Although common law was initially abhorred by some American settlers because of its British origin, in the nineteenth century it was viewed as an embodiment of the accumulated wisdom and best approximation of natural rights and duties (Miller, 1965). Thus, cases of maritime insurance were adjudicated by federal rather than state courts, not for the logical reason that the federal government should be responsible for conflicts regarding ocean transport, but because American jurists drew on precedents created by the British admiralty. The struggle of some Protestant sects to ban theories of evolution from schools because they conflict with the Bible also illustrates the continuing legitimating influence imputed to the past, in this case an inherited sacred text. Similarly, in the secular sphere, Colonel Oliver North of the Iran-Contra scandal referred to heroes of the American War of Independence in order to justify assistance to the “freedom fighters” supported by the U.S. in Nicaragua. Yet, the invocation of precedents as a legitimation of current actions is always shaky. For example, appeal to historical precedents may recall events or actors that many people would prefer to forget. Thus, the legitimacy of the past has enabled Native Americans to justify their claims on the basis of near forgotten treaties and the anteriority of their presence in America.

Appeals to reason may further complicate attempts to resolve conflicting interpretations of precedents or traditions. When Allan Bloom accuses deconstructionists of valuing the interpreter’s creative activity more than the text itself (1986, p. 378), he forgets that there are always competing interpretations of the text and that history is constantly re-written to fit the needs and visions of dominant or aspiring groups. Which precedent, which original text, which framework of legitimacy to invoke are ever present questions. For example, a wide range of different precedents are invoked by alternative legal

metaphors used in adjudicating cases of surrogate mothering. One can rely on precedents governing conflicts over rents. Cast in this interpretive tradition, the renting of a womb is akin to renting an apartment. Conversely, one can extend to surrogate mothering the principles used to deal with prostitution, principles that forbid women from making money by using their sexual organs. One also can generalize the precedents of slavery to surrogate mothering and assert that selling ones own infant is even worse than selling a stranger. Finally, one can base decisions concerning surrogate mothering on the reasonings used to deal with the sale or gift of human organs for transplant, in which case donors or their surviving relatives are engaged in a charitable act.

The availability and use of such alternative interpretive traditions suggest the fragility of attempts to eschew interpretation in the name of some direct representation of an original truth. Instead, both the maintenance and innovation of precedents inevitably involve selective retention. In choosing an appropriate precedent or tradition, one undertakes a journey into the collective memory, and each of these journeys has its own duration and itinerary. Each may bring back different gifts (or curses) from the pasts and, hence, each seems to relativize the others, thereby promoting a postmodern view of all traditions as alternative rhetorical performances none of which corresponds to any historical essence.

In more general terms, whereas the manipulation of precedents and traditions helps to advance immediate instrumental ends, such instrumentalism subverts the very conception of tradition that it exploits. Indeed, the principles of instrumental efficiency, rationality, and progress are the antithesis of tradition. Thus the more that tradition is used instrumentally, to win arguments or justify positions, the more it is uprooted from its taken-for-granted normative contexts, and the less it can serve as a stable source of meaning, identity, and motivation. With the growth in technical efficiency of the means of mass destruction, for example, patriotism may become a call for collective suicide; with the success of demographic engineering, appeals to motherhood become anachronistic. Family planning replaces instinct or religion as a vocabulary of sexual motivation, now directed by pharmaceutical enterprises instead of the church. Indeed, the practices of policy analysis or social planning announce that what once was accepted as traditional can be otherwise, that traditions can be used or abandoned, and that the choice is not in correctly interpreting the legitimate tradition but in accepting or rejecting it in terms of administrative criteria that themselves have no traditional legitimation. As Al Ghazali observed many centuries ago, "There is no hope of returning to a traditional faith after it has once been abandoned, since the essential condition in the holder of a traditional faith is that he should not know he is a traditionalist". Thus competing invocations of the past in contemporary society undermine tradition as a source of legitimacy even while

deploying it as a justification. In this process, the lifeworld becomes more rationalized and, hence, more available to penetration by the market, State, and corporations.

## **LEGITIMACY AND THE RISE OF THE SUPERCORPORATION**

Contradictions between the requirements of the State to protect capitalism, and to govern democratically, also many undermine legitimacy. Contemporary capitalism needs State intervention to preserve the conditions of profit-taking by capitalists, to regulate markets, maintain domestic order and the stability of labor, and defend the interests of capital at home and abroad. In avoiding economic crises, for example, or in schooling a new generation of workers, the government takes on an increasing role, even as this role is modified through corporate partnerships, outside contracting, or privatization. While the State has the task of sustaining accumulation, however, it also must maintain a certain degree of mass loyalty and acceptance of regulation. Although compliance with the rules and laws can be secured to a limited extent by coercion, excessive coercion suppresses the innovation that is a requirement of global competitiveness for advanced economics. Moreover, the stability of societies claiming to be democratic depends more on the existence of a widespread belief that the system adheres to principles of equality, justice and freedom. Thus the State in capitalist democracies must act to support the accumulation process and at the same time conceal much of what it is doing in order to protect its image as fair and just. As this contradictory stance itself threatens mass loyalty, it too tends to foster delegitimation (Held, 1982, p. 184; Habermas, 1975).

For many decades, a major resolution of this contradiction was the corporate welfare State. In this model, capitalist democracies depends on the State to maintain markets for labor and investment capital, and also to provide policies and programs for welfare, social control, and legitimation. Marxists have argued that this does not resolve the contradiction, however, because the interests of profit are basically inimical to those of welfare and popular self-direction. Instead, the State becomes unable to reconcile the popular demands transmitted through democratic institutions with the requirements of the national and international capitalist class, yielding disorder and delegitimation. Ironically, a parallel view of populist democracy and social movements has been developed by conservative political theorists who assert that rising expectations will result in an "overload" of State bureaucracies and hence a breakdown of government authority, thereby proliferating further demands, further deligitimation, and further "ungovernability."

Thus in both radical and conservative theory, the modern capitalist State contains a contradiction: "Political stability can be maintained only to the extent that citizens accept the legitimacy of the state's democratic promise: that it will be a neutral and objective mediator that defends the public interest. But as the interventionist state creates new problems and expectations for citizens in community and social life, its . . . imperative [to foster capital accumulation] violates its claim to legitimacy and the state becomes increasingly an arena for political struggle" (Krauss, 1989, p. 232). Thus, the liberal State is an object and arena for struggle because it announces a promise it cannot keep: "Democracy, equality and liberty, within the context of capitalism" (Bowles & Gintis, 1986, p. 225).

For conservatives, the recommended response to this contradiction is to suppress demands for wages and social consumption by strengthening discipline, moderation, and restraint, and by altering both cultural values and administrative practices (Offe, 1984, pp. 164–165). Conservative elites also try to limit or bypass the democratic values and processes which they believe are the causes of overload and delegitimation of the system. Thus elites may resort to extra-legal nonpublic, corporatist, informal, or other poorly legitimized forms of policy making. In parallel, citizens may withdraw from official channels of political expression into social movements or even extra-legal forms of protest or social control, such as the Weathermen or other illegal violence. Either by elites or popular forces, official political institutions are bypassed and, hence, delegitimized. Social movements of course also may function to renew and *re*legitimize democratic institutions, such as the party system and elections but, if they fail, anti-democratic elite and populist reactionary elements grow stronger.

The role of the State, and its interdependency with business, advanced greatly in response to the Depression. The interventionist State and the process of corporate-State integration accelerated further during World War II. This continued in the post-War period, when the functions of government shifted from the passive role of nightwatchman to the positive role of enhancing the well-being of the American people through mass consumption capitalism. This "unrecognized revolution," – as the London *Economist* (8 August 1964, p. 550) called it, was epitomized in the Employment Act of 1946, which established the Council of Economic Advisers and which led to active management of the economy by the State. The Preamble of this Act legally instituted the corporate State under the rhetoric of employment and general welfare: "The congress declares that it is the continuing policy and responsibility of the Federal Government to use all practicable means . . . to foster and promote free competitive enterprise and the general welfare . . . to promote maximum employment, production, and purchasing power."



Business leaders also were clear about what they called the “government-business partnership,” as the following statements suggest:

Since the early part of this century we have been developing a new form of public-private society . . . Call it what you will, the fact remains that this kind of government is here to stay, and those who would accomplish almost anything of public interest must work with the government (Baker, 1959, p. 12, col. 7).

The facts of today’s world are such that the old attitudes of many businessmen toward government, and the old attitudes of many government people toward business, are no longer relevant. There can be no longer any question as to whether or not these two groups can or will work together; they must work together. The vast changes that are sweeping our nation make cooperation a necessity (Ikard, 1966, p. 25).

Many authors have noted the potential of great corporate and governmental bureaucracies to thwart individual freedoms. The Founders were wary of the potential of democracy to become mob rule, but they also worried that even representative government could become despotic. Alexis de Tocqueville issued a complementary warning: that the rise of great manufacturers (today’s corporations) would one day threaten democracy. What almost no one noticed, however, was the potential for a rise of both a powerful executive State *and* huge corporations working in tandem with each other, largely to the exclusion of ordinary citizens.

In shaping policies of the national government, for example, the major corporations are far more influential than the fifty geographic states. Indeed, in many areas of policy the latter are significant mainly as administrative districts for policies that are established by corporate and federal actors. President Woodrow Wilson asserted in 1908 that “the question of the relation of the states to the federal government is the cardinal question of our constitutional system.” But this is not the case today. Instead, the cardinal question today is the relation of the supercorporations to the federal government. Federalism continues as the form, but it has little of the political or economic content that it had in 1800 or even 1900. Instead, “the supercorporations have produced a national economy which is superimposed upon a decentralized formal political order, and in so doing, have warped the federal system and undermined its legitimacy” (Miller, 1968, p. 19).

In the new corporate State, the historical meaning of “socialism” is inverted. Today, State protection, subsidies, and benefits are for “the already rich and affluent, while the poor and the disadvantaged, who traditionally have plumped for socialism, are told to pursue the elusive path of rugged individualism. The techno-corporate State is not a system of state socialism; ownership of the units of the economy rests with private individuals, not the government. But that difference, while important, does not prohibit a high degree of cooperation

between the units of public government and private government; they thus act as two sides of one medal" (Miller, 1968, p. 73).

Yet the supercorporation has only a thin claim to legitimacy. Under the Constitution and in American cultural values, power, to be legitimate, must derive from the consent of the governed, through the vote or other forms of public accountability. But the corporate elite is in fact a largely self-appointed and self-perpetuating oligarchy.

How then do the corporate oligarchs legitimate themselves? First, because they have delivered the goods to many Americans. Despite great inequalities, most Americans lead relatively affluent lives. Second, though the Constitution guarantees freedom of speech, highly concentrated media conglomerates restrict freedom of communication, excluding viewpoints or criticisms that they do not consider "reasonable" or "responsible opinion". The "culture industry" thus promotes citizens' passivity and acceptance.

The corporate elite also has legitimated itself through an ideological shell game. John Locke, the thinker with most influence on American political philosophy, conceived of the State as the defender of property. This conception supported democracy more in the early nineteenth century when most Americans were engaged in agricultural production and many were landholders. After the industrial revolution, however, Locke's arguments were applied intact to the new corporate concentrations of enormous wealth. This ideological triumph protected corporations not only from nascent avant-garde socialist attacks on the private ownership of the means of production, but also from the rear guard of traditionalists who defended the old agrarian order. Socialism was largely crushed or co-opted in America, and agrarian conservatives "had no convincing way of distinguishing private ownership and control of one kind of enterprise, the farm, from private ownership and control of a radically different kind, the business corporation. Thus by an extraordinary ideological sleight of hand, the corporation took on the legitimacy of the farmer's home, tools, and land, and what he produced out of his land, labor, ingenuity, anguish, planning, forbearance, sacrifice, risk, and hope. The upshot was that the quite exceptional degree of autonomy the farmer members of the demos had enjoyed under the old order, an autonomy vis-à-vis both government and one another, was now granted to the corporation" (Dahl, 1977).

These changes had two major consequences that undermined democratic culture and the legitimacy of the State. First, although the new corporate order created increased wealth, it also polarized the society more by wealth, income, social esteem, education, skills. Moreover, the occupational structure itself polarized mostly white Anglo-protestant male owners and professionals from more recently immigrated "ethnic" wagelearning workers. These differences

converted readily into political resources, with power now more concentrated in the new industrial class and away from an earlier agrarian demos. Second, the new industrial firms and government agencies were (and still are) hierarchic and often despotic. As large percentages of the population came to work in such organizations, they lived much of their lives in anti-democratic environments. Thus the space in everyday life for active democratic participation was radically reduced, and the habits of citizenship diminished.

## **TECHNICISM AND THE CRISIS OF LEGITIMACY**

The rise of gigantic firms and the corporate State, with their avalanche of policies, programs and experts, also fostered a new ideology of governance, an ideology that may be called *technicism*. As the term implies, this orientation values the use of technique, or the means of achieving something, over whatever ends are to be accomplished. It thus gives a special place in governing to professional experts, the masters of technique. Citizens are still thought to have a role in setting ends, but this role is diminished as experts increasing are looked upon to define which ends are reasonable or could be possibly achieved. Means are considered morally neutral, since they are now viewed as a matter of technique. Since their technicist language is inherently incapable of ethical self-reflection, it eschews substantive moral criticism. Thus, reasoned moral judgement about both means *and* ends is little by little excluded from the public sphere.

In using calculated rationality to advance profits or programs, corporate firms and governmental agencies also become the quintessential vehicles of modern power. Such organizations use information (more than knowledge) to control both their members and their clients. The roles of both functionaries and consumers are defined and shaped in terms of system efficiency, profitability, or organizational expansion or reproduction. For example, McDonalds has trained its customers to be their own waiters and busboys, as other firms have trained their callers with phone prompters to be their own service representatives.

This technicist way of thinking and being is, seemingly, highly effective in the operation of large, information-driven organizations, as well as for the day-to-day performance of the people who inhabit them. But it also has profound consequences for humane and democratic values. For when such a way of being becomes dominant in a society, corporations and bureaucracies are seen as having a life of their own. The human purposes that they were designed to serve are easily forgotten, and the cybernetic system comes to generate ends and purposes of its own. The relevance of freedom of speech and democratic action is thereby diminished, as is the public space for their enactment. In

such a world, freedom becomes confined to a narrower and narrower sphere of private life.

Experts such as shamans and priests have always been a source of legitimacy because they possess sacred knowledge. Usually they are allied with political authorities, or are such authorities themselves. In the modern period, lawyers, administrators, social scientists and other professionals have been added to this list, and they too are used by secular elites (Haskell, 1984). For example, American industrialists were keen to substitute expert arbitrators for lay juries in the administration of common law. In their eyes, such experts were more likely than the common man to advance elite interests. The role of experts has grown further in the postindustrial political economy with its large scale bureaucracies, global networks, high division of labor, knowledge-intensive production, and the apparent difficulty of individuals and groups to make informed decisions unaided by specialists. As expertise takes precedence over lay knowledge, even the most trivial statements come to be prefaced by references to the professional affiliations of their authors. As expertise proliferates, consensus emerging from shared civic judgments.

One can distinguish those who are *in* authority because they hold a mandate, and those who *are* authorities because they have expert knowledge. Thus elected officials are authorities on nothing in particular but nevertheless are in authority, whereas plumbers are authorities on pipes and drains, but nowhere are in authority except, perhaps, in flooded basements. In advanced societies, however, this distinction becomes blurred as specialized knowledge appears to be necessary for more and more activities. This partly is due to the greater complexity of society as a whole, where a high division of labor makes many people specialists and almost no one generally competent.

The growth of expertise also is a function of the weaker links between the generations and, hence, a reduction of socialization into informal knowledge and practices. For example, large, extended, intergenerational households had little need of Dr. Spock or other experts in childrearing because such knowledge was acquired informally at home. Advanced economies also are more knowledge dependent in both production and consumption, creating more needs and positions for experts. Thus, increasingly, experts are *in* authority because they *are* authorities – in medicine, management, accounting, law, education, and dozens of other domains. Social practices and institutions thereby come to embody an ethos that is less democratic than technocratic (Ball, 1984, p. 743). Indeed, the very number and types of experts today is staggering. “More than 50% of college and university faculty make themselves available for special consultation and expert testimony in one form or another” (J. A. Kingson, 1982). The media also have created a demand for expert commentary; there is even a

*Directory of Experts* written explicitly for them (by M. P. Davis, 1987). There also exists a voracious demand for self-help books written by experts.

One sign of the importance of expertise is the pervasiveness of testing. Americans are undoubtedly the most tested people in human history. Testing often begins before birth, with amniocentesis. Americans also have their intelligence tested periodically when young, and their job aptitudes tested a little later. If deemed suspicious, at work they may submit to drug and lie detection tests. And at some point they will likely check the status of their love lives, career adjustment, and development of their children with “objective” tests designed and evaluated by experts.

Another sign of technicist tendencies is the increased power imputed to machines, whose outputs are taken as trustworthy because of their neutral inhuman qualities (Beniger, 1986). Computer results are thought to be insensitive to personal bias. Thus, Americans tend to place greater trust in the results of lie detectors than in live detectives (Hearne, 1986). Similarly, many teachers assert that grades given to students on the basis of multiple choice examinations scanned by computers are more valid and legitimate than those given on essays assessed personally by instructors. Administrators see students’ assessments of teachers in the same light. (This contrasts to Catholic countries where teachers and students tend more to respect hierarchic authority even while acknowledging the foibles of human judgment, and where the analogy of the Confession is used to legitimize the activities of examiners.)

This resort to expertise has several internal contradictions. Since being wrong with the pack is much less damaging to one’s reputation than being wrong alone, experts fear risk and innovation, which reduces the variability of the judgments they offer in public forums. Competition among experts for public visibility may encourage some to innovate, but generally competition accentuates only the most marginal contrasts between viewpoints. Moreover, since expertise is expensive, the advice of experts as a whole tends to reflect the assumptions of their usually prosperous clients. This also narrows the range of insights, perspectives, and choices available to the general public. Indeed, one way for elites to deflect and literally bankrupt an insurgent social movement is to seduce it into a “battle of experts” which the better funded group almost always wins (Brown, 1998, Ch. 9). At the same time, skepticism of ordinary citizens and the equivocal divergences in the testimonies of experts undermine their collective claim to apodeictic knowledge.

With the growing division of labor in society and in the academy, disciplines narrow into specialties and individual experts no longer know much outside their domains of expertise. As their opinions are invoked in an ever wider spectrum of ever narrower fields, however, the relative distance which separates

each of them from some common ground of shared experience keeps increasing. This then creates space for a plethora of how-to books. That hyper-specialization creates generalized ignorance also is illustrated by the banality of the opinions of Nobel Prize winning scientists when they address broad moral or social questions. It also is seen in the popular definition of the expert as “the person who knows more and more about less and less,” or of the professional as “the person who doesn’t care why or where she is going as long as she gets there competently.”

The privileging of expert technique denudes public life of ethical considerations and turns moral-political concerns into policy options, business decisions, and cost-benefit ratios (Fisher, 1984, p. 12, Farrell & Goodnight, 1981). As a consequence, the notion of “public” comes to refer to the publicizing of expert opinions or to the aggregate of individual sentiments, rather than to the public as an informed citizenry collectively forming reasoned political judgments.

Modern leaders must often make decisions based on technical knowledge that they little understand. President Roosevelt had to rely almost entirely on experts in his decision to develop the atom bomb, just as President Clinton did to assess the prospects of an air war in Yugoslavia. Yet experts often do not know the broader implications of their recommendations and often they disagree – circumstances which rarely can be resolved by further expertise.

Nonetheless, champions of expertise advocate the technical application of scientific knowledge to all political decisions (Brown, 1989). Their hope is that a scientific politics will eliminate the anarchy of conflicting opinions and interests and thereby enhance society’s operational efficiency. In this form of legitimation, the discourses of engineering or medicine are taken as models for public life. In these applied disciplines, it is thought that disagreements are settled without reference to personal wishes or group power, but instead on the bases of objectively measurable preconditions and outcomes. Similarly, in a politics of expertise, “decisions” are expected to have same neutral characteristics as those of engineering (Fay, 1975, p. 23). This description of how important disputes are resolved in medicine or engineering is empirically dubious at best, but it does highlight key features of legitimation through expertise – the reduction of rationality to instrumental calculation, the separation of means and ends, and the disavowal of rational consideration of values.

The technicist orientation has been elaborated into a full-blown theory of postindustrialism, with its own vision of the future and a set of strategies to realize its objectives. Though its lineage can be traced to Auguste Comte, leading thinkers include Daniel Bell, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Amatai Etzioni, and Philip Rhotkin. Technicism and the technocratic society also has been discussed with varying degrees of complacency or alarm by Hannah Arendt, Niklas

Luhman (1982), James Coleman (1982), Manfred Stanley (1981), and Jürgen Habermas (1975). Technicism has also been adopted as a basic orientation by top political leaders of most Western political parties, as well as by such formidable political economic organizations as the Tri-Lateral Commission, the IMF and the World Bank. For these adherents, post-industrialism has brought forth an unprecedented societal formation, one that is so differentiated, complex, and interdependent that it requires, and to some extent has created, a new scientific form of governance and a new class of professional experts. These experts are to produce the appropriate types of policy-relevant knowledge deemed necessary for “societal guidance,” thereby eroding the function, power, and relevance of both politicians and citizens. Thus, in the interest of efficient governance, technicist ideology and practice depoliticize democracy and largely exclude citizens from “public” policy.

One strand of technicist ideology that encourages this depoliticization is the “end of ideology” thesis itself, especially as espoused by its two major American advocates, Daniel Bell (1991) and Seymour Lipset (1979). In place of traditional ideologies of the Left and Right, these new (anti-)ideologists substitute technicism, without noticing the concomitant growth of the corporate state and its penetration into sectors from which it has been excluded. Scientists and scholars are accomplices in delivering our pluralist society into the hands of big Government and bigger to the extent that they affirm the privileged role of specialized knowledge in the guidance of public affairs. In *The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society*, for example, Bell (1973, p. 20) wrote that “Post-industrial society is organized around knowledge, for the purpose of social control and the directing of innovation and change; and this in turn gives rise to new social relationships and new structures which have to be managed politically” (p. 20). In this new society, capitalist values associated with property, wealth and production will gradually give way to values based on knowledge, intellect, and education. In place of the entrepreneur, the expert emerges as the new ideal. Indeed experts and professionals in general have crucial ideological functions for a new kind of legitimation in postindustrial society. First, professionals and experts claim to be objective and disinterested in their service to society, thereby removing politics from the passions of the proles and putting governance on an objective, scientific basis. Second, the ideology of governance through expert technique obscures distinctions between who rules society and who runs it. It is true that more social activities are directed by persons with professional training and pretensions. But this does not mean that they themselves are not directed. And, indeed, though experts and professionals have become more important in running advanced societies, these societies continue to be largely ruled by corporate elites who themselves now reproduce their class

advantages more through advanced professional education. Thus technicist ideology announces the end of ideology even as it both obfuscates and justifies the continued domination of the corporate State.

As State and market come to govern more and more areas of life that were formerly thought of as traditional or private, social conditions and personal fates are demystified, and viewed more as the outcomes of political economic management (or *mismanagement*), and less as the result of individual failings or natural causes. In effect, the visible hand of the State comes more to supplement the invisible hand of the market. People come to see more and more areas of life as political, that is, within the potential control of the State. This stimulates further demands on the State, not only to make just and efficient decisions over a wider scope of issues, but also to consult and accommodate more and more varied constituencies. This "excess" of democratic demand, along with the demystification of the State, invite a legitimation crisis when the State becomes unable either to avoid economic downturns, on the one hand, or fails to provide adequate social benefits on the other. Of course, class inequalities of wealth and power are crucial in these processes since the State must secure the loyalty of most of the populace while mainly serving the interests of a few. Yet as the State's role expands and these inequalities become more transparent, the States' further interventions stimulate even more popular dissatisfaction and delegitimation.

In America more than elsewhere, modernity implies the diffusion of the ideologies of rational calculation and possessive individualism across all groups and arenas of social life. But these two ideologies promote competing versions of legitimacy. And as the system becomes more rationalized and pervasive, and people withdraw more into their personal or enclave worlds of emotion, this conflict deepens. The principle of rational calculation links legitimacy to objectivity, the principle of possessive individualism links it to subjectivity (Macpherson, 1962). Originally these two sources of legitimation joined in the notion of money or profit, which underlined rational calculation and measured the success of the acquisitive individual operating in a market economy. In postmodern society, however, with its oligopolistic public and private bureaucracies, its casino capitalism, its consumer culture, *and* its fragmented moral orders, these two earlier sources of legitimation have lost their common existential basis. Rational calculation and subjective individualism now represent two distinct strategies of individuals and organizations, and two distinct and often competing principles of legitimation.

Though the subjective private realm of personal relations serves as a haven from the rationalized worlds of markets, corporations, and the State, such extreme rationalization continues to erode boundaries between the two. The ethos of



bureaucratic or market calculation encroaches constantly on the private sphere, producing reality anemia by reducing or reifying personal experience into generalized impersonal categories useful for managing others but not oneself. Correspondingly, the definition of freedom as the right to participate in civic life is transformed from a positive value into a negative one: freedom becomes the right to withdraw from civic life. As citizens become bureaucratic functionaries or private consumers, responsibility shifts from the individual as a moral being to impersonal rules, regulations, and calculations of efficiency on the one hand, or to personal tastes and lifestyles on the other. Morally committed action is thereby rendered merely subjective, if not irrational. In both the abstract system and the personal lifeworld, reasoned ethical and emotional judgments appear to be oxymorons, seemingly arbitrary and anachronistic because they are dysfunctional to the emerging techno-system. Thus, "rationality" itself becomes the ideological catchword for the mystification of a curtailed individual participation in public affairs and for the ensuing political dominance of elites and their experts.

As various processes and contradictions of postindustrial political economies have undermined the moral links between persons and their polity, and there has been an inflation in the number of competing sources of legitimation, there is fragmentation of the concept of legitimacy itself.

## **PLURALISM AND THE TENSION BETWEEN DUE PROCESS AND THE WEIGHT OF RESULTS**

American concepts of legitimacy also have been influenced by America's extraordinary abundance of land and resources as these encouraged a plurality of widespread, distinct communities of belief. Decentralization, radical individualism, and the myth of the frontier, combined with a millennialist Protestant tradition, encouraged non-conformists to move further West where they could join or create communities more to their liking. In the proliferation of utopias throughout American history, from the Amish or Oneida to more recent hippie, New Age, and militia communes, each utopian community stood as a challenge to both established sources of legitimation and those of other utopian groups.

The plurality of cultural origins of Americans has made it difficult to define the consensual basis necessary for political and social life. To be sure, the effects of this plurality have been counterbalanced by the myths and partial realities of the melting pot and of equal opportunity. But earlier immigrants, such as the British and the German, enjoy clear advantages over groups that arrived later. The rank-ordering of Americans in terms of their time of arrival has undermined the timeless and transcendent quality of American culture as a moral order. Moreover, as social assimilation and mobility can often be

bought only at the price of abandoning or even betraying one's national or provincial origins, "successful" individuals often experience social and emotional losses that erode the ideals of pluralism and the melting pot (Cuddihy, 1974; Fuchs, 1989; Vidich, 1987). Even this cruel choice – ethnic loyalty and marginality, or assimilation and cultural betrayal – has long been denied to persons of color insofar as they bear highly visible physical markers of origin and stigma.

Thus, American nativism on the one hand, and cultural pluralism on the other, oppose each other as distinct legitimating principles. One attempt to resolve such tensions is to consider American beliefs or conducts as proper to the official, objective, or public spheres of life, and to consign ethnicity to the subjectivity and particularism of the private realm. But this makes public life impersonal, while it turns national, ethnic, or religious backgrounds into idiosyncratic folklore, thereby creating a seedbed of alienation for extremist confrontations and subversions of the legitimate order.

In response to pluralistic conflicts over basic ends and values, Americans have elaborated the concept of due process and of justice as procedural rather than substantive. Unable to easily reach consensus on substantive values, they assert that a correct procedure for making decisions should itself generate respect for its outcomes. As the popular expression puts it, "It's not whether you win or lose [that's important], it's how you play the game". The variability of state laws also has accentuated the effects of this triumph of formal over substantive values. As the preeminence of self-interest in American ideology reduced moral stability and consensus, the Social Contract was limited to focus on the formal procedures – rather than the substantive justice – of social transactions. One example of acquisitive individualism is that, since the initial phases of industrialization, American legislators have increasingly abandoned the notion that the law should dictate the lower and upper limits of what individuals can offer or demand in contracts (Horwitz, 1977).

Thus, the preeminence of procedure over substance is related to American conceptions of individual free choice, the pursuit of personal happiness, and the polity as a marketplace for labor, goods, feelings, votes, and ideas (Bensman & Lilienfeld, 1985). In such a conception, there is no broadly accepted vision of a commonweal or the good society. Instead, persons are thought to be free to pursue their own private interests as long as this does not interfere with the freedom of others. But what then can be the basis of moral solidarity and political participation within the society? And why would people have a moral interest in fulfilling the private obligations of their various deals? In this situation, the concept of fair play has emerged in which legitimacy is not based on equity of outcome, but on equability of process.

Given their individualistic and market orientations, Americans are slow to accept any general and transcendental ideal of justice that might ground this procedural conception of legitimacy. On the contrary, definitions of substantive democracy or justice are seen simply as ideologies that serve one or another interest group. For example, critics argued that the focus of the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George Bush on legalistic and procedural issues helped to shift public discussion away from substantive concerns about inequalities of class, race, and gender. Similarly, concern over official misconduct in the Iran-Contra and Whitewater scandals were reduced to the question, "What did he know and when did he know it?" Questions of the morality and appropriateness of the operations were thereby pushed aside. Similarly, debate over the Clinton health reform focused on questions of cost and access and not on the more substantive question of who should live or die – a striking omission given that over 80% of health costs are incurred in the last two months of patients' lives.

A focus on due process rather than moral substance also served to mask growing inequalities of wealth and power that emerged with the rise of great manufactures in the nineteenth century and have accelerated since 1970. For example, in dealing with conflicts about contracts, American courts for a long time retained the notion of fair price and the underlying sense of *noblesse oblige* associated with stable social and economic arrangements. Later on, the courts began to selectively underline the importance of compliance to formal criteria and procedures that make contractual agreements binding (Horwitz, 1977). Using arguments inspired by Social Darwinism, jurists sought to legitimate increased inequalities in the bargaining power of different economic actors. The courts did this by simultaneously minimizing the substantive limits that laws could impose on contractual obligations, and maximizing the significance of contractual procedures. Eventually, the law could hardly restrict the terms of bargains, but only review the correctness of their forms.

Legality, as represented in documents such as constitutions, bills of rights, and statutes supported by judicial procedures are, in Weber's terms, the basis on which legitimacy is claimed under a system of rational legal authority. Thus legitimacy granted by the electoral process is limited and restricted by the parameters of the law. When engaging in actions for which routine legal acceptance cannot be expected, leaders have been careful to find or create in advance explicit legal justifications for such actions, as for example, in the Gulf of Tonkin resolution during the Vietnam War. When legality can not be adhered to, clandestine actions are possible through agencies such as the CIA and FBI, or through the subcontracting of illegal work to private businesses such as the Mafia. Since these latter actions are kept secret, they can be thought either to

not exist or to represent only an occasional lapse into illegality. "Legitimacy is thus ultimately based on claims of legal rationality supported by rhetorical invocation of 'government of laws, not of men'" (Vidich, 1973, p. 781). Mass communications, image management, spin, leaks, disinformation, and other forms of propaganda are also activities of government that are not part of the traditional language of rule of law. Because government must resort both to propaganda and to extra-legal and covert forms of action, legitimacy based on due process is thereby put at risk.

Conflict thus arise between legitimacy based on effective performance, and legitimacy based on fair and acceptable procedures. For example, both the Weatherman Underground Organization and the CIA have claimed moral legitimacy for illegal armed attacks on the institutions of their own or other governments. The need to sometimes claim legitimacy for all varieties of political action places the politician in a precarious position when political choices involve severe moral compromises (Vidich, 1973, p. 809). In these circumstances the legitimacy of rulers is easily challenged.

Legitimacy through results often is in conflict with legitimacy through due process because desired results sometimes can be achieved more easily if proper procedures are ignored. This is illustrated by the hidden tension between law and order. The strict enforcement of the law may stimulate disorder, and the maintenance of order may require the selective enforcement, or even violations, of law. This is frequently seen in ethnic neighborhoods, where local police might permit (for a fee) community practices such as gambling because to prohibit them could generate resistance and disorder. Thus universalistic legal procedures, which emerged to manage cultural diversity, are undermined by illegal (non)enforcement in the interest of order, which also accommodates cultural differences.

In sum, emphasis on legal forms renders many Americans insensitive to the distinction between legitimacy and legality and, hence, between substantive ethics and procedural norms. This gap is fertile ground for the growth of cynicism (Goldfarb, 1992). Thus legitimacy through due process and fair play ("how you play the game") is modified by a contrary focus on whether the action gets results. As Vince Lombardi, the coach of the Green Bay Packers, put it, "It's not whether you win or lose . . . , it's whether you win."

Legitimacy gained from the results of actions draws on the American traditions of utilitarianism and pragmatism. Americans distrust State power and believe that it can be given directly to private citizens or private firms which the State has legally created. Repeatedly throughout their history, Americans have attempted to empower the people directly or through their representatives and at the same time to limit the scope and power of State bureaucracies. But this has had an ironic effect: Government in America is both big *and* weak.

Thus legitimation through popular democracy generates conditions that undermine governmental effectiveness and, hence, legitimation through results (Morone, 1991).

Further, in contrast to legitimacy through expertise, legitimacy through results is a lowest-common-denominator concept. Much like political mandates or opinion surveys, legitimacy through results emphasizes the significance of good numbers, such as the body count, the square miles of territory conquered, the amount of taxes collected, or the number of clients served. Like the formalism of due process, such aggregate numbers support the process of rationalization because they decontextualize and universalize any individual or collective claim to achievement by restating it in calculative, bureaucratic language. Measures of results in *outputs* of specific programs, however, rarely reflect the *impact* of such activities on overall goals or success. High body counts did not win the Vietnam War nor do high rates of job placements by federal employment agencies notably affect overall rates of unemployment. Hence, legitimation by results often involves conflicts in the meaning of success and which results are to be measured.

The invasion of Iraq, for example, derived its legitimacy mainly from its battlefield success, including its limited American casualties, but lost legitimacy by the staying power of Saddam Hussein. Similarly, public failure to assess the legitimacy of the Vietnam War may be due to the lack of positive results for either the Right *or* the Left. For the Right, America lost the war; for the Left, the rebels whom they championed turned out to be despotic killers. Hence, neither side could claim positive results to legitimate their position. Instead, the entire war is now discussed in the language of psychotherapy, as a “trauma” or “syndrome” that needs a process of “healing”. Again, a radically subjective discourse of therapy is invoked when the hyper-rationalized system reaches its limits.

At the individual level, the importance attached to results – the bottom line, as it is said – highlights the role of money as an embodiment of formal rationality (Weber, 1978, Simmel, 1978). This entails the substitution of utilities for meanings and, above all, the replacement of commercial for civic values. Once all meanings are either dispensed with or translated into comparable utilities, all values become subject to market or bureaucratic calculation and legitimacy comes to be measured in terms of practical results. Absent from such calculations, however, is a grounding or context for the agent who is doing the calculating. In other words, what is missing in such conceptions of legitimacy is a cultural basis for moral agency and citizenship.

Since money is the most universal measurable sign of results, the sheer quantity of wealth or material possessions becomes an indicator of legitimacy.

Such abstraction is also a subtraction, since universalization of measures hides the variability of what they indicate. The universality of money as a criterion of success also is qualified by the distinction between “new money” with its connotation of greedy acquisition and vulgar consumption, and “old wealth” with its implications of genteel inheritance and refinement of taste. Here older elites emphasize inherited breeding at the expense of avaricious achievement.

The use of wealth or consumption as measures of success and legitimacy reaches entropy, however, when further production and consumption exhaust scarce motivational and material resources. People want more and more things since the inherited value of any particular thing has been emptied by its character as a commodity and its use in status competition. Yet, they want to work for these things less and less, since there is a proportionate decline in the inherent value of work. As motivation decreases relative to the supply of consumable rewards, legitimation again becomes problematic.

In some circumstances, legitimacy is maintained because the results of action are too disturbing to accept. Thus inertia by fear of the unknown can sustain an otherwise dubious legitimacy (Krugman, 1991). Challenges to existing structures of power are costly, not only because of the repression they might trigger, but also because they may reveal the obsolescence of entire political institutions and make it necessary to build lifeboats for the deluge *après moi*. For example, President Clinton regularly “put his presidency on the line” for particular issues. Similarly, officials of the Reagan administration banked on public fear of a constitutional crisis when they fought for the candidacy of Judge Bork for the Supreme Court, hoping that this would limit the Senate’s scrutiny of the nominee.

The Iran-Contra hearings also illustrate how fear of the unknown can legitimate action or inaction. President Reagan and his aides believed that both their opponents and the public would judge the costs of a new presidential scandal and impeachment to be too high coming so soon after Watergate (Vidich, 1973). And they were partially right; presidential aides were more deceitful and Congressional investigators more timid than they otherwise might have been, and the perpetrators went unpunished. A similar fear probably restrained some Senators in the proceedings to impeach President Clinton. Because of the fear of unknown results in such crises, actors may limit the scope of conflicts and avoid general confrontations. The unknown costs and risks of a full challenge are deemed greater than the reforms to be gained from limited criticism.

In sum, the pluralism of belief systems characteristic of American culture has inclined Americans toward a legitimacy based on due process rather than on substantive general values. Yet due process itself is jeopardized when it

yields unjust results, even as the achievement of useful or admired results (or the fear of bad ones), if achieved through illegitimate means, also can undermine legitimacy based on proper procedure.

### **LEGITIMATION BY MANDATES THROUGH ELECTIONS, PARTICIPATION, PUBLIC OPINION, AND MEDIA IMAGES**

For a long time the franchise enjoyed by Americans had a limited scope. Even though the Republic was founded on the ideals of liberty and equality, these were initially enjoyed only by free propertied white adult males. Former slaves received the right to vote only after the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and the Civil War Amendments to the Constitution. Direct election of Senators was enacted only in 1918. Women were able to vote only in 1920. To this array of exceptions one could add the recurrent blindness of both judicial authorities and public opinion to violations of universalistic values through open discrimination and even political terror such as rape of women or lynching of blacks. All such instances undermine the supposed indivisibility of liberty and equality, subjecting them to challenges and bargains incompatible with their alleged majesty as basic principles of legitimacy.

Legitimacy nonetheless is conferred by mandate. Such mandates may be gained from public elections or from appropriate nominations. In the public sphere, actions of elected officials are presumed to be legitimate because the votes they have gathered entitle them to speak on behalf of their community, that is, the electoral community that constitutes them as authorities. Such mandates too are bound by notions of correct procedure. For example, the mass support of Mao TseTung was not accepted as legitimate by Americans because it had not been gained through free and fair elections. In the private sphere, the election or the appointment of the Chairman of the Board according to the corporate charter endows that person's decisions with legitimacy.

Similarly, husbands and wives are presumed to behave legitimately on behalf of each other and their children, due to the mandate they *elected* to give to each other when they married. Legitimacy derived from domestic mandates helps to explain the reluctance of public authorities to intervene in the case of family violence, or of national governments to do the same in the case of other countries' domestic strife. For example, when the father of an abused daughter was stopped by a highway patrolman and asked to explain the bruises on her face, his reasons were held legitimate, even though the trooper was sufficiently suspicious to take a photograph of the victim, who died some weeks later. Of course, the domestic mandate has been undermined as the public has become

aware of its role in perpetuating sexism and family abuse. Nonetheless, the Supreme Court decision of 1989 exonerated individual states from any liability for victims of domestic violence, thereby confirming not only the preeminence of the domestic mandate, but also the frequent lack of fit between public and private sources of legitimacy in this regard. Moreover, the decreased solemnity and increased secularization of rights of marriage or divorce jeopardize the notion of domestic mandate that was already made fragile by the diversity of rules of the various states.

The role of political mandates as a source of legitimation has been eroded by a number of factors. First, the notion of representativeness of political mandates is increasingly attacked. Political representatives, whether congresspeople, governors, or presidents, are often nominated by pluralities of unrepresentative social groups for their own particular interests. With increasing costs of campaigning and with most of the funds coming from economic elites, those with greater financial resources can effectively buy their own political representation (Neustadt et al., 1992; Qualter, 1985; Rothman, 1979). As in the cases of Malcom Forbes or Ross Perot, some wealthy people can personally finance their own political candidacy or party. To the extent that electoral shifts reflect the success of opinion management through private money, however, the legitimacy of any possible mandate is thereby weakened.

Second, since the turn of the century the legitimating power of electoral mandates has been eroded by significant declines in levels of political participation (Neumann, 1986; Piven & Cloward, 1988). As a result, the electoral mandate may be more easily subject to errors, manipulation, or challenges (Dugger, 1988). For example, the election of John Kennedy over Richard Nixon was contingent upon the votes of the Chicago machine, the absentee ballots of California, and the possible Mafia involvement in the countings from polling places in West Virginia. When Nixon did win the presidency in 1968 it was by a plurality not a majority, as was the case with Clinton's victory in 1992. The victory of various presidents also has different meanings depending on whether one counts the electoral votes or the popular votes (as in 2000), or if one compares the percentage of votes won to the percentage of eligible voters who stayed home. For example, Reagan's 1980 majority victory represented a minority (only 48%) of the eligible voters, thereby undermining the legitimacy of his mandate.

Last, pre-election allegations of character weaknesses hurled by office seekers at each other – such as womanizing, mental troubles, religious sectarianism, or past use of drugs – erode further the legitimacy that successful candidates can claim after their elections. This may be combined with *post*-election charges and inquests, as in the case of Senator Robert Packwood who was investigated for sexual harassment and forced to resign in 1992. Indeed, the diffusion of



such charges spreads suspicion to *all* candidates and induces the public to suppose that innocence is only an appearance engineered by a temporarily successful cover up. All these ambiguities make mandates a problematic source of legitimacy.

Engineered participation is another way that organizations and states have sought to generate mandates and also to link the workings of the political system with moral meaning in persons' life-worlds. The collapse of traditional legitimations and the moral vacuity of both technicism and consumerism present elites with heightened problems of social control that in turn have had two basic solutions: repression or liberalization. Often both these solutions are attempted at once. Radical dissidents are suppressed, and moderate critics are coopted, and an apparent mandate is generated by the local machines of national special interest groups. In advanced capitalist societies, such cooptation has become an integral part of sophisticated planning processes themselves, as evidenced by the movement for citizen participation among liberal policy elites.

Yet, the effects of greater participation are equivocal. On the one hand, it may slack the radical energies necessary for significant change, result in the cooptation of movement leadership, mystify differences of class interests by merging them in a planners' vocabulary of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, or ratify a materially exploitative class structure in exchange for mere status acceptance. On the other hand, increased participation may also increase demands rather than mollify them, or result in an elitist backlash against participation that engenders long term popular resentment and reduces of guidance of the system.

Despite its ambiguities, popular participation has become necessary to overcome resistance to technocratic guidance and to thereby stabilize the system. Hence, efforts are made by elites to guide and coopt participation, rather than to resist and suppress it. This explains in part the rise of mass opinion and money-driven electioneering. Indeed, public officials are tempted to use mass opinion polls to both measure and gain additional support for their decisions (Wheeler, 1976). As an illustration, President Reagan, who was elected partly for his anticommunism, sponsored surveys during the visit of Premier Gorbachev in 1987 in order to assess how Americans evaluated the daily performances of the two leaders. Jack Valenti, a former presidential aide, joked that "Gorbachev was running third in the Iowa primaries". Such media images and opinion polls are used to indicate what political actors need to do or to avoid. The use of focus groups, polling, and Hollywood media consultants were further refined by the Reagan and Clinton administrations. Candidates Steve Forbes and Robert Dole in 1994 and George W. Bush and John McCain 2000 used "push polls" in their Republican primary campaigns to covertly disseminate negative information or lies about their respective opponents. Journalistic

accounts also contribute to this image mongering, since their apparent self-evidence and televisual hyper-realism discourages reflection or verification on the part of the reader or viewer.

Media manipulation and impression management have become indispensable tools for successful politicians (see Bennett, 1983; Edelman, 1988; Entman, 1989; Laufer & Paradeise, 1988; Rosen, 1988; Vidich, 1990). For example, leaks of privileged information are means of guiding media attention and, hence, of public opinion. The belated “discovery” and “publicity” of the crimes committed during World War II by Kurt Waldheim, former President of Austria, are an example, since Waldheim’s actions were certainly known and covered up long before they were created as topics of public concern. Likewise, General Noriega was allowed by the United States to become the strongman of Panama and was used by Colonel North as an arms-runner and drug dealer, but this latter role was leaked only when Noriega ceased to be sufficiently useful. On the domestic scene, damaging information previously known to insiders, including perhaps some journalists, was published against Senator Biden just in time to lower the plausibility of his attacks against Judge Bork, then a candidate for the Supreme Court. The role of Anita Hill in the confirmation hearings of Judge Thomas also can be understood this way. Similarly, presidential advisors from President Reagan’s Michael Deaven to President Clinton’s counselor Dick Morris, are essentially managers whose job it is to create pseudo-events or to repair happenings that got out of control. As President Reagan’s chief of staff, Donald Regan, put it,

Some of us are like a shovel brigade that follows a parade down Main Street cleaning up. We took Reykjavik and turned what was really a sour situation into something that turned out pretty well. Who was it that took this disinformation thing [American plans to attack Libya] and managed to turn it? Who took on this loss in the Senate and pointed out a few facts and managed to pull that? I don’t say we’ll be able to do it four times in a row. But here we go again, and we’re trying (*Economist*, November 22, 1966, p. 27).

The 1998 fictional film, *Wag the Dog*, which shows master media manipulators creating a war in order to boost a President’s ratings, is today merging with factual events or at least with their reconstructions.

The increased role of media images and opinion polls underlines a shift in the notion of legitimacy through mandates, which today are based less on the stability of the past than on images of the current moment, as suggested by the growing use of terms such as spin doctors, sound bites, and handlers. The mandate of legitimacy given today can be withdrawn tomorrow because reality anemia and historic amnesia have shortened the life-span of public attention, knowledge, and ideas. Indeed, knowledge itself gets reduced to information and, thence, misinformation or disinformation, thereby narrowing the role and responsibility of any individual knower.

Through such processes, civic participation in a shared institutional life is reduced to the exercise of narrowly specialized functions or conveyed through the reified and segmented images of the media. "The grandchildren of men and women who once stayed late in the night at the Grange Hall or the union hall, talking intensely with each other about what kind of society they wanted to build, now stay home watching TV" or scanning the Internet (Harrington, 1985, p. 18). Media executives and website designers conceive of screen watchers not as citizens, but as segmented audiences and markets, each with its own demographic or socio-economic characteristics, life style, and pattern of consumption. This commercial culture supports the moral minimalism of many Americans, a solipsistic tolerance whose Eleventh commandment is "Thou shalt not be judgmental." (Hall & Lindholm, 1990; Wolfe, 1998). Making collective judgments about shared moral/political issues, however, is precisely what deliberative democracy is about and what makes mandates democratic. Thus, much of media, marketing, and consumerism in politics subverts the classical meaning of the public, reduces the reasoned judgments of citizens to mass opinion, and thereby undermines legitimation through mandates. (Atlas, 1984; Brenkman, 1979; Geiger, 1969; Mills, 1963).

Hence, whereas mandates formerly required either public *actors* who acted or actively abstained, they increasingly have become contingent on the *images* generated by the media. Even though people have become more suspicious of official information, distinctions are harder to make between actions and announcements and between announcements and advertisements. Indeed, the difference between action and image has narrowed as more and more of what officials do is done simply to be reported on, and being reported increasingly is what turns some occasion into an "event". Increasingly in postmodern society, the image *is* the action or event.

The theatricalization of civic life is made evident in the now famous question inherited from Watergate: "Will that play in Peoria?", and also in the actions and reactions of the American TV networks and their publics to the Iran-Contra hearings and, later, to the presidential scandals surrounding Whitewater, Paula Jones, and Monica Lewinsky. Some viewers liked the Iran-Contra hearings because its repetitions enabled them to recognize the same players and procedures, the same challenges and strategies, which often were like those they had observed in the media coverage of Watergate and, later, of the Lewinsky affair. Yet, other demographic segments of the audience were either bored or hostile, which induced the networks to lessen their overall coverage. Similarly, the dramaturgical styles used by Congresspeople to ask questions to Oliver North shifted in response to the opinions that were reported to be held about him. And since the immunity that Congress granted to partic-

ipants pre-empted their being criminally indicted later by Special Prosecutor Walsh, theatre did in the end triumph over justice. In turn, this triumph of theater has undermined legitimacy, as shown by the sympathy of many Americans for the “bit players” (notably Susan McDougall) that Special Prosecutor Kenneth Starr indicted in order to squeeze for testimony damaging to President Clinton.

Americans’ conceptions of the importance of public knowledge for democratic government are institutionalized in laws protecting freedom of speech and freedom of the press. “The right to freely transmit information and news was thought of as a powerful instrument not only for resisting the tyranny of government but also for the creation of an educated political community. The safety and well-being of democracy were thus linked to an intellectually enlightened public. With the advent of mass media and highly complex institutions of opinion formation, the slogan freedom of speech and press has been extended to cover these newer media. However, the media are highly complex bureaucracies which specialize in gathering and transmitting news and information” (Vidich, 1973, p. 784). Often these organizations are the size of whole government agencies. Conversely, Starr’s \$70 million budget generated a prosecutorial bureaucracy on the scale of many of the news bureaus that were covering it. Both entities were primarily engaged in manipulating images and appearances, yet their own processes of manipulation were largely hidden from the public. “Thus, in both government and the institutions of the mass media, there is a backstage of administrative process which is managed by political and administrative bureaucrats who make laws and break them at the same time they manage the appearance of legality. So long as frontstage and backstage are kept apart – in our terms, so long as the propaganda remains intact – crises of legitimacy are not likely to occur” (Vidich, 1973, p. 785).

To sum, media imagery, opinion surveys, and impression management increasingly are used to create facts and define outcomes, to create mandates for aspiring elites or to show existing leaders as perspiring rats. As such, they have become significant sources of legitimacy. Captains of Industry now work through Captains of Consciousness (Ewen, 1976; Qualter, 1985); kingmakers and imagebusters converge. Such image making pushes the political hyper-reality of the media further away from the lived experience of citizens. Whereas legitimacy always requires the presence of rituals and hence of social theater, the erosion of public space for active citizen participation in civic life reduces individuals to passive witnesses of spectacles. The voyeurism caused by mass media undermines the active participatory rituals required for civic legitimacy and electoral mandates.

## LEGITIMACY IN POSTMODERN SOCIETY: A REPRISE

The problems of legitimacy reflect basic tensions between the personal and institutional levels of American life. Social forms are always in tension with personal experience, but such tension is especially acute in fast changing, culturally heterogeneous, and highly rationalized societies. An emphasis on stability maximizes predictability but impedes change, whereas a faster rate of change heightens the need for predictability, and also reveals the fragility of links between social forms and personal experience. And, since most social and ideological forms are also forms of domination, their character as obstacles to a more equitable allocation of material and symbolic goods also becomes more evident when their pretense to universality is relativized by rapid change. It is history, more than literary critics, that deconstructs ideological absolutes. While change heightens the need for legitimacy, it also makes any form of legitimacy more transparently ideological.

The crisis of legitimacy results not only from the accentuation of change but also from the coexistence of contradictory time-orientations of different social groups and their respective ideologies. Thus, sources of legitimacy discussed above reflect the diverging time-orientations of postmodern societies. Electoral mandates, religious judgments, due processes, and precedents all reveal the sacred quality imputed to the past. By contrast, the role assigned to experts expresses the myth of progress and of a future necessarily better than the present and the past.

In an ideal past, the dominance of a single moral and political paradigm, and hence of a single source of legitimacy, enabled authorities to identify and tolerate at least a modicum of conservative rear guard and progressive avant-garde actions. In postmodern America, however, the moral center has not held, and there is now a proliferation of rear and avant-gardes, each claiming to be the old or new mainstream and each advancing its preferred form of legitimation. Hence, it has become more difficult to distinguish normal from marginal, progress from regress, or good from evil as the proliferation of competing mainstreams and avant-gardes encourages each to undermine the credibility or legitimacy of the others.

Thus, accelerated rationalization, social change, and media images have multiplied the number of interest groups and individual commitments, but this has not mollified the loyalties and attachments that had already existed. Hence changes in the political economy generate contradictions both *within* and *between* ideologies and groups and generate a multiplicity of incommensurate political and moral language games. The ensuing crisis of legitimacy not only undermines the authority of institutions such as governments, schools, or

families, but also induces self doubt, or alternately self glorification, in individuals who are now uprooted from stable moral meanings. Indeed, the erosion of legitimacy and the spread of narcissism are co-terminus.

The centrifugal forces at work in postindustrial, postmodern societies are particularly visible in America. This is because the high commitment of Americans to social change, their rejection of antecedents, their separation of Church and State, and their faith in science, individualism, pluralism, and decentralization have always thwarted efforts to develop a coherent moral basis for social life. With the rise of the corporate State and increased role for experts and professionals, the ideology and practice of technicism has grown, with all the problems for democracy and legitimacy that we have described.

Ironically, when public consensus concerning standards of legitimacy erodes, a politics of narrow and extreme interest groups emerges, along with efforts to rationalize legitimacy itself, in formal codes of ethics, review boards, legalistic insistence on procedure, and various instrumental tactics to simulate the appearance if not the actuality of legitimacy. All this reflects the disjunction between an increasingly abstract, distant, and hyper-real social structure and a radically subjectivized and anomic (or liberated) individual existence. What disappears in this dialectic is any ethically reasoned sense of legitimacy or public good. When all versions of the public good are radically relativized, organizational legalism seems to be the only source of stability as legitimacy fragments.

Yet this may be as much a source for hope as a cause of despair (Bartel, 1996, p. 31). Those cultures may be the richest, in resources and potentials, in complexity of ideas, in experimentation and critique, that display tensions within their discourses of legitimation rather than a hegemonic dominance of any one of them.

## REFERENCES

- Atlas, J. (1984). Beyond Demographics. How Madison Avenue Knows Who You Are and What You Want. *The Atlantic Monthly*, (October), 49–58.
- Baker, M. H. (1959). Chairman of the Board of National Gypsum Company and a Vice-President of the National Association of Manufacturers, quoted in *Christian Science Monitor*, (July 2), p. 12, col. 7.
- Ball, T. (1984). Review of Haskell's *The Authority of Experts*. *Contemporary Sociology*, 13(6), 743–744.
- Barber, B. (1983). *The Logic and Limits of Trust*. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Bartel, D. (1996). Cultural Movements and Legitimation Strategies. Manuscript. Department of Sociology. SUNY Sonybrook.
- Becker, H. (1984). *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bell, D. (1991). *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*. New York: Free Press.

- Bell, D. (1973). *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*. New York: Basic.
- Beniger, J. R. (1986). *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bennett, W. (1983). *To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education*. National Endowment for the Humanities.
- Bensman, J. (1988). The Crisis of Confidence in Modern Politics. *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 2(1), 15–35.
- Bensman, J., & Lilienfeld, R. (1985). Law in Society: The Place of Reason and Rationality. *International Journal of State, Culture, and Society*, 1(2), 58–84.
- Bierstadt, R. (1964). *Legitimacy*. *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*. New York: Free Press.
- Bloom, A. (1986). *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Blumenberg, H. (1983). *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, R. W. Wallace (trans.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1986). *Democracy and Capitalism: Property, Community and the Contradictions of Modern Social Thought*. New York: Basic.
- Brenkman, J. (1979). Mass Media: From Collective Experience to the Culture of Privatization. *Social Text*, 1(Winter), 94–100.
- Brown, R. H. (1998). *Toward a Democratic Science: Scientific Narration and Civic Communication*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press.
- Brown, R. H. (1995). Realism and Power in Aesthetic Representation. In: R. H. Brown (Ed.), *Postmodern Representations: Truth, Power, and Mimesis in the Human Sciences and Public Culture* (Ch. 7, pp. 134–167). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Brown, R. H. (1990). Social Science as Civic Discourse. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Brown, R. H. (1989a). *A Poetic for Sociology: Toward a Logic of Discovery for the Human Sciences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Brown, R. H. (1989b). *Social Science as Civic Discourse*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Brown, R. H. (1989c). How Art Became a Commodity. In: R. Swaim (Ed.), *The Modern Muse: Condition and Support for Individual Artists* (pp. 13–26). New York: American Council for the Arts.
- Caplow, T., Bahr, H. M., Modell, J., & Chadwick, B. A. (1991). *Recent Social Trends in the United States: 1960–1990*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.
- Clignet, R. (1990a). L'Exceptionnalisme. In: M. F. Toinet & A. Lenkh (Eds), *L'Etat des Etats Unis* (pp. 72–72). Paris: La Découverte.
- Clignet, R. (1990b). On Artistic Property and Aesthetic Propriety. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 4(2), 229–248.
- Clignet, R. (1985). *The Structure of Artistic Revolutions*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Clignet, R. (1974). *Liberty and Equality in the Educational Process*. New York: Wiley.
- Coleman, J. S. (1982). *The Asymmetric Society*. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Connolly, W. E. (1987). *Politics and Ambiguity*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Crozier, M. (1984). *The Trouble with America: Why the System is Breaking Down*, P. Heinegg (trans.). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cuddihy, J. M. (1974). *The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, and Levi-Strauss and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity*. New York: Basic.
- Davis, M. P. (1988). *Directory of Experts, Authorities, and Spokespersons: Talk Show Guest Directory*. Washington: Broadcast Interview Source.
- Dahl, R. A. (1977). On Removing Certain Impediments of Democracy in The United States. *Political Science Quarterly*, 92(Spring)(1), 1–20.

- Ditz, T. L. (1986). *Property and Kinship*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Dugger, R. (1988). Annals of Democracy. *The New Yorker*, Nov. 7, 40–108.
- Durkheim, E. (1964[1893]). *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Free Press.
- Edelman, M. J. (1988). Constructing the Political Spectacle. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Edsall, T. B., & Edsall, M. D. (1991). Race. *Atlantic Monthly*, (May), 53–86.
- Eitzen, S. D., & Timmer, D. A. (1985). *The Sociology of Crime and Criminal Justice*. New York: MacMillan.
- Entman, R. M. (1989). *Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Epstein, J. (1996). White Mischief. *New York Review of Books*, (October 17), 30–32.
- Ewen, S. (1976). *Captains of Consciousness*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Farrell, T. B., & Goodnight, G. T. (1981). Accidental Rhetoric: The Row Metaphors of Three Mile Island. *Communication Monographs*, 48, 271–300.
- Fay, B. (1975). *Social Theory and Political Practice*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Fisher, W. R. (1992). Narration, Reason, and Community. In: R. H. Brown (Ed.), *Writing the Social Text: Poetics and Politics in Social Science Discourse* (Ch. 12, pp. 199–218). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Freidrich, C. J. (1963). *Man and His Government: An Empirical Theory of Politics*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Fuchs, L. H. (1989). *The American Kaleidoscope: Pluralism and the Civic Culture*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Geiger, T. (1969). The Mass Society of the Present. In R. Mayntz (Ed.), *Theodore Geiger on Social Order and Mass Society* (pp. 169–184). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gerring, J. (1998). American Political Culture: An Institutional Explanation. Paper presented to the meetings to the American Political Science Association, September, Boston.
- Goldfarb, J. (1992). *The Cynical Society: The Culture of Politics and the Politics of Culture in American Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gross, A. G., & Walzer, A. (1997). The Challenger Disaster and the Revival of Rhetoric in Organizational Life. In: R. H. Brown (Ed.), *From Critique to Affirmation: New Roles for Rhetoric in Creating Civic Life, A Special Number of Argumentation* (Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 75–93).
- Habermas, J. (1975). *Legitimation Crisis*. Boston: Beacon.
- Hall, J. A., & Lindholm, C. (1999). *Is America Breaking Apart?* Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Harrington, M. (1985). Norman Thomas, Dignified Democrat: A Socialist's Centennial. *The New Republic*, (January 7 & 14), 16–18.
- Haskell, T. L. (1984). *The Authority of Experts*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.
- Hearne, V. (1986). *Adam's Task: Calling Animals by Name*. New York: Knopp.
- Held, D. (1982). Crisis Tendencies, Legitimation and the State. In: J. B. Thompson & D. Held (Eds), *Habermas: Critical Debates* (Ch. 10, pp. 180–195). Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Heller, A. (1987). *Beyond Justice*. New York: Basil Blackwell.
- Hittinger, J. P. (1989). The Moral Status of the Expert in Contemporary Society. *The World and I*, (August), 561–585.
- Hodgson, G. (1992). *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Horwitz, M. J. (1977). *The Transformation of American Law 1780–1860*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ikard, F. N. (1966). President of the American Petroleum Institute in Where Business and Government Meet, *7 Petroleum Today*.



- Inglehart, R. (1991). Changing Values in Industrial Society: The Case of North America, 1981–1990. Paper presented to the meetings of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C.
- Kleinberg, B. S. (1973). *American Society in the Post-industrial Age: Technocracy, Power, and the End of Ideology*. Columbus OH: Charles E. Merrill.
- Krugman, P. (1991). *The Age of Diminished Expectations: U.S. Economic Policy in the 1990s*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Laufer, R., & Paradesi, C. (1988). *Marketing Democracy: Public Opinion and Media Formation in Democratic Societies*. New Brunswick NJ: Transaction.
- Levi, M. (1998). A State of Trust. In: V. Braithwaite & M. Levi (Eds), *Trust and Governance*. New York: Russell Sage.
- Lipset, S. M. (1979). *The Third Century: America as a Post-Industrial Society*. Stanford CA: Hoover Institute Press.
- Litowitz, D. (1997). *Post-Modern Philosophy and Law*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press
- Luhman, N. (1982). *The Differentiation of Society*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- MacIntyre, A. (1988). *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- MacIntyre, A. (1981). *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Macpherson, C. B. (1962). *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Merryman, J. H., & Elsen, A. E. (1987). *Law, Ethics, and the Visual Arts*, 2 Volumes. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Miller, P. (1965). *The Life of the Mind in America*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Miller, A. S. (1968). Toward the ‘Techno-Corporate’ State – An Essay in American Constitutionalism. *Villanova Law Review*, 14(1)(Fall), 1–73.
- Mills, C. W. (1963). Mass Media and Public Opinion. In: *Power, Politics and People: The Collected Essays of C. Wright Mills* (pp. 577–598). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Morone, J. A. (1991). *The Democratic Wish: Popular Participation and the Limits of American Government*. New York: Basic.
- Nelkin, D. (1984). *Science as Intellectual Property*. New York: MacMillan.
- Neumann, W. R. (1986). *The Paradox of Mass Politics: Knowledge and Opinion in the American Electorate*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Neustadt, A., Clawson, D., Scott, D. (1992). *Money Talks: Corporate PALs and Political Influence*. New York: Basic.
- Offe, C. (1984). *Contradictions of the Welfare State*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Piven, F. F., & Cloward, R. A. (1988). *Why Americans Don't Vote*. New York: Pantheon.
- Qualter, T. H. (1985). *Opinion Control in the Democracies*. New York: St. Martin's.
- Reich, R. B. (1991). Unacknowledged Legislators. *The New Republic*, (January 21), 38–42.
- Reich, R. B. (1991). *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st-Century Capitalism*. New York: Knopf.
- Richardson, J. (1993). *Pressure Groups*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rosen, J. (1988). Election Coverage as Propaganda. *Propaganda Review*, (Summer), 5–14.
- Rothman, S. (1979). The Mass Media in Post-Industrial America. In: S. M. Lipset (Ed.), *The Triad Century: America as a Post-Industrial Society* (pp. 327–344).
- Scharr, J. H. (1981). *Legitimacy in the Modern State*. New Brunswick NJ: Transaction.
- Simmel, G. (1978). *The Philosophy of Money*, T. Bottomore & D. Frisby (trans.). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

- Simmel, G. (1971.[1903]). The Metropolis and Mental Life. In: D. Levine (Ed.), *George Simmel, on Individuality and Social Forms* (pp. 324–339). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Skinner, Q. (1998). *Liberty Before Liberalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stanley, M. (1981). *The Technological Conscience: Survival and Dignity in an Age of Expertise*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Stanley, M. (1979). *Reason, Relativism, and History: Legitimate Authority in an Age of Power*. Department of Sociology, Syracuse University.
- Szabo, D. (1973). The Post-Industrial Society, Deviance and Crime Diagnosis and Prognosis for the Year Two Thousand. Manuscript. Informational Centre for Comparative Criminology, Université de Montreal.
- Thomson M. (1979). *Rubbish Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Vidich, A. J. (1991). The End of the Enlightenment and Modernity: The Irrational Ironies of Rationalizations. *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 4(3), 269–284.
- Vidich, A. J. (1990). American Democracy in the Late Twentieth Century: Political Rhetorics and the Mass Media. *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 4(1), 5–29.
- Vidich, A. J. (1987). Religion, Economics, and Class in American Politics. *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 1(1), 4–22.
- Vidich, A. J. (1973). Political Legitimacy in Bureaucratic Society: An Analysis of Watergate. *Social Research*, 779–811.
- Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, G. Roth & C. Wittich (Eds). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wheeler, M. (1976). *Lies, Damn Lies, and Statistics: The Manipulation of Public Opinion in America*. New York: Liveright.
- Wolfe, A. (1998). *One Nation, After All: What Middle-Class Americans Really Think about God, Country, Family, Race, Welfare, Immigration, Homosexuality, Work, the Right, the Left, and Each Other*. New York: Viking.
- Wolfe, A. (1977). *The Limits of Legitimacy: Political Contradictions of Contemporary Capitalism*. New York: Free Press.
- Wolff, J. (1981). *The Social Production of Art*. New York: St. Martin's.

# ALIENATION'S ANTIDOTE: THE VARIETIES OF CONTEMPORARY MYSTICISM\*

Philip Wexler

## INTRODUCTION

We can now see the possibility of reversing alienation in everyday life. Informational corporatism intensifies the abstraction, powerless dependency, and fragmentation and dispersion of energies and experience, which typified industrialism. To that, it added a middle level between machine and worker. Interpersonalism of the corporate form substitutes for simple social interaction and carries with it an entire culture and psychology of everyday life.

The academic emphasis on postmodernism has drawn attention to the decadent, dissolute aspects of this culture, but not to its integrity, strength and durability. In its haste to describe the dispersion of the subject, the multiplicity of forms and media of cultural expression, and indeed, of the supersession of social structure itself by cultural psychology, it has neglected to underline the power of continuing social determination of alienated life.

This alienated life is harder to read because its source is not so easily identified as a personalized, transparent oppression of the capitalist. The global postindustrialism described by contemporary analysts of social structure like Harvey (1989) and Castells (1996) is impersonal, almost invisible, by virtue

\* A version of this paper will appear in *Mystical Society* (Westview Press, in press).

of the abstractness of its origins and operation. While partly occluded and distracted by the very means of culture and psychology to which we now aim so much of our analytical attention, the effects of global postindustrialism in everyday life are no less real, pervasive, and deeply consequential to our being as a species than Marx first realized in his descriptions of industrial alienation.

The displacement of sociology by cultural studies simply follows the mass cultural ideology by ignoring study of the determinations of social organization for social being, perhaps because of both the apparent complexity of such determinations and because even we professional social analysts now take for granted as natural what is happening in our everyday lives. Or, perhaps we have simply lost our capacity to imagine what is possible.

The “end” not of ideology, but of utopia, is part and parcel of our obsession with the description of postmodern culture and our preoccupation with study of “the self”, in both instances mirroring popular concerns instead of questioning and dissenting from them. The decline of social analysis in favor of cultural and psychological interpretation, even as they may claim to be “critical”, combines with the loss of utopianism to warn of the imminent loss of a social and “sociological” imagination.

But imagination is a master of hiding, disguise, play-acting and sublimation. The stage has, I think, been set socially. The social regime of postindustrial, capitalist, market informationalism, like earlier forms of social organization, includes within it and sets the terms for alternative, oppositional forms of organized social life, even when it does not promote and encourage their actualization. Of course, this is the view of social dialectics, which more poetic Marxist rhetoric has always seen as “the system creating its own “gravediggers” – who, as we now know, do not come to the fore inevitably and automatically.

I have argued that we have now the conditions of a “mystical informationism”. The displacement of the coordinates of time and space which Castells (1996) describes in his version of the informational age are not, as he sees it, simply the conditions for the emergence of defensive, compensatory, communal counter-identities. Rather, they indicate the locus and form in which truly alternative social practices can be imaginatively elaborated. At the same time, there are more tangible compensatory social practices, which I place under the rubric of revitalization. The hyperabstraction of the prevailing society creates, simultaneously with intensified alienation, the relocation and reframing of the possibilities of an alternative social life into the language and thought of mysticism. Within those terms, we find elaboration of already emergent counter-practices.

This rhetorical displacement now brings attention to a revival of interest in varieties of traditions of mystical thought. I see this revival as providing cultural resources for a contemporary appropriation. For the flowering of mystical expression is where the social imagination of structurally possible social alternatives is now being creatively and dynamically held. Nor is this an entirely "imaginary" social, but one that amplifies contemporary, observable, alternative practices of social being. Mysticism is not simply the current discursive location of utopian fantasy. It is also the cradle of present, though inchoate, social practices and forms, as well as harbinger of a different model of everyday social life.

## DESTRUCTION

In this hopefully more dialectical view, the importance of postmodernism is in the work of destruction. Disorientation of conventional time and space coordinates, deeper feelings of social homelessness, pervasive fear, discommitment, distrust, personal anxiety, disease, despair, cynicism, endless instrumentalism, and so on, are effects of the destruction of the social structure of modernity and of its cultural and psychological integument. Both the worry and the embrace of narrative incoherence, in academic and mass culture, are testimonies to a loss of cultural force, to the ineffectuality of culture's claims of commitment on beliefs that create meaning.

Yet the same analytic obsession with culture among the critics corresponds to the cognitive performance emphasis of self-denying corporatism. This is the educational cognitivism that suppresses being and indirectly instigates the self-denying affirmation of school violence. It represents a lack of feeling and interest in feeling, a "decathexis" to complement disorientation, except for its uses in an instrumental interpersonalism. For along with the academic view that postmodernism leads to a dispersion, a decentering of the older, repressed self of modernity, lack of cultural force leads to an evacuation of social routines that create a feeling self. This tendency to a cognitively overloaded stripping of a fully social, feeling selfhood goes along with the sort of "sensorial numbing" or "neutralization" and loss of sensual, existential memory that Seremetakis (1994) ascribes to the commodified life of modernity, which I suggest, postmodernity completes (1994, pp. 9–10):

The particular effacement of sensory memory in modernity, is mainly a consequence of an extreme division of labor, perceptual specialization and rationalization. The senses, in modernity, are detached from each other, re-functioned and externalized as utilitarian instruments, and as media and objects of commodification.

And, perhaps more deeply (1994; p. 8):

The capacity to replicate a sensorial culture resides in a dynamic interaction between perception, memory and a landscape of artifacts, organic and inorganic. This capacity can atrophy when that landscape, as a repository and horizon of historical experience, emotions, embedded sensibilities and hence social identities, dissolves into disconnected pieces. At the same time, what replaces it?

Of pre-modern cosmologies, Classen observes (1998, p. 1):

The visualist regime of modernity, in fact, prides itself on its transparency; everything can be seen, everything can be known, nothing is withheld from our inquisitive and acquisitive eyes. The microscopic view and the panoramic view intersect to display our world to use inside and out. However, the very visualism of modernity has, so to speak, thrown a cloak of invisibility over the sensory imagery of previous eras. So thick is this cloak that one can scarcely see through it, or even recognize that there might be something worth exploring underneath. When this cloak is lifted, however, the cosmos suddenly blazes forth in multi-sensory splendor: the heavens ring out with music, the planets radiate scents and savors, the earth springs to life in colors, temperatures, and sounds.

... a glimpse at the fertile aesthetic landscape of pre-modern cosmologies by delving into ways in which the cosmos was conceptualized through sensory imagery before the rise of the modern scientific world view. (Classen, 1998, p. 2)

Televangelism notwithstanding, in many ways Christianity would seem to have escaped the visualizing tendencies of modernity and remained a stronghold (or perhaps a museum?) of multisensory iconology. Many churches in the twentieth century West are still fragrant with incense. Religious services are still held in the time-honored oral fashion. However, if the traditional sensory signs of worship remain in certain branches of Christianity, much of the symbolism which once integrated them into a larger sensory and sacred reality has been forgotten. It is this vanished multisensory cosmic order ... (Classen, 1998, p. 2).

Disorientation, decathexis, desensitization (and the accompanying de-motivation) are aspects of both the emergence of a social structure of corporate informationism and the failure of a postmodern culture to provide a culturally or individually integrative alternative. This is a failure that postmodern cultural analysts ordinarily accept as a necessity, if not as a virtue, of postmodernism.

## CREATION

Two societies, two cultures, two types of selfhood exist simultaneously. One is modern society with an industrial capitalist base, a culture of clear cognitive and moral orientation built on the tradition of Western, Protestant asceticism and the unified, if repressed and neurotic, individualized self. The other, whether as postindustrialism or informationalism, is a society of flexibility and flow, of either 'de-mooring' or 'timeless time', and of an eclectic mass culture that supports by diversion the work culture of a corporate interpersonalism characterized by an interaction of instrumentally-driven intersubjectivity.

And in its ferocious technological dynamism, this second society wipes away unnecessary social, cultural and psychological mediations, intermediary structures and arrangements that impede the fast flow of information and production. Postmodernism completes the modernist destruction which Serematakis (1994) describes and in answer to her question, replaces it with the valorization of emptiness, boundarylessness, abstractness and intangibility, selflessness, and an extensive dedifferentiation which erases even the border between life and death, in the ideal of immortality.

It is precisely and directly on the grounds and in the terms of this postmodern destruction that creation of a new social being, a different organization and understanding of everyday life occurs. Its effects set the stage for that which we recognize as classical forms of mysticism. The practical move from a postmodern to a mystical society began with what has been described in academic and mass culture as a "resacralization".

But the return of religious interest is not in the traditional forms; institutionalized religious attendance and membership has not substantially increased. Rather, I suggest that the resacralization of belief is an indicator of a reorientation of experience. Against the postmodern effort to reclaim human agency by ironic play in and with discourse and in its sign-centered, consumption cognitivism, the resacralization of meaning opens to collective, but apparently individualized, practices to create a different everyday experience of being in the social world.

These practices, while obviously subject at every point to continual incorporation as commodity culture fuel, are generative and ultimately socially creative. In the cauldron of the contemporary form of alienation through technological, social organizationally induced disorientation, production-corporatist routines of interpersonalist self-denying decahexis, and in the consumption castle of desensitization, these very conditions of social, cultural, and individual evacuation and emptying constitute the experience of collective creation. For it is precisely characteristic of mystical experience that it generates being under these conditions.

The demediation of modern social, cultural and psychological forms – the destruction of spatially and temporarily grounded, stable, predictabilities of interstitial, interrelated types of organization, meaning and identity – leads to the creation of everyday life in their very absence, indeed, of a form of life characterized by their absence. Mysticism is traditionally typified by its lack of mediation, its immediacy.

The boundarylessness and timelessness unintentionally created in the experientially alienated present become the means for experientially creating meaning. The implosion of the modern self by informational saturation (Gergen,

1991) is the basis for identity formed out of self, trans-personally, beyond the self. One can reasonably argue on purely theoretical grounds, I believe, that there is a clear parallel between the “alienated” existential conditions of the social present and the ideals of mystical thought and life as described in many cultures, in Western, as well as Eastern traditions.

I want to suggest more than a theoretical parallelism, which I think would have a certain Archimidean, if not utopian, value. My point is that in resacralized religious, as well as other current revitalization movements, these mystical practices are already emergent. Beyond that, my own effort here represents a recognition that the infusion of the elements of a mystical society, as antidote to postmodern alienation in everyday life, has already occurred to such a recognizable extent that we are now engaged in its legitimization, by citing precursors and canonical sources.

I offer examples from four varieties of mystical tradition, inquiring as to their implications for understanding self, social interaction and society.

## SELF

### *American Religion: Drugs, Nature, Immanence*

What is first evident in the creation of a mystical society is the popularity of religion. In his recent account, Wuthnow (1998, p. 1) begins:

Judging from newspapers and television, Americans’ fascination with spirituality has been escalating dramatically. Millions of people report miraculous interventions in their lives by such forces as guardian angels who help them avoid danger and spirit guides who comfort them in moments of despair. Faced with death, many people report seeing a brilliant tunnel of light that embraces them in its mysterious glory – and live to write best selling books about these experiences. When pollsters ask, Americans overwhelmingly affirm their faith in God, claiming to pray often to that God . . .

Wuthnow goes on to chronicle the transformation of American religion from the “dwelling” institutional religiosity of the fifties to the “seeking”, freer, market- and self-improvement technique-oriented religion since the sixties and now, to a still more individualized religion of spiritual practice. Not only is religion more personal, privatized and inward, but at the same time, it recreates interest in the “soul” as a method of gaining comfort and hope in a more ‘fluid’, ‘complex’, and ‘homeless’ world. The evolving interest away from institutional religion to spiritual practice that is displayed from interview materials indicates the unmediated, devotional efforts of direct individual relation to divinity, as well as to a pervasive spirituality – a spirituality in



everyday life. He quotes an example of the newer emphasis on a non-institutional inner life of everyday spirituality (1994, p. 164):

Spirituality is a practice of everyday things and everyday life; it's not limited to ritual times; it calls me to honor everything that is before me. Everything is a spiritual activity . . .

The shift from the religion of dwelling was, Wuthnow writes (1994, p. 57), “. . . being challenged by religious movements that reasserted some of the mystery that had always been part of the conceptions of the sacred”. In fact, as Fuller argues in his history of the “unconscious” in American thought, there is a deeply rooted “mystical or aesthetic strain of Puritan piety” (1986, p. 7) in American Protestantism. This “Aesthetic spirituality”, for Fuller, “consists of those forms of belief and practice based upon the conviction that there are hidden depths to nature in which resides the secret to achieving spiritual composure” (1986, p. 6). The aesthetic religious posture emphasizes instead the inner experience of beholding God as spiritually present within the natural universe. This “American religion”, which he finds in Jonathan Edwards and Ralph Waldo Emerson, is a religion of harmonial piety, not the Yankee individuality founded on an unbridgeable divine-human gap; but a cosmic, mystical nature religion which relies not on the self, but on a person’s “rapport with the cosmos” (1986, p. 18), a *generativity of self-surrender*.

Quoting Emerson (1986, p. 16), “. . . that beyond the energy of his possessed and conscious intellect he is capable of a new energy (as of an intellect doubled on itself) by abandonment to the nature of things”, Fuller traces the mystical nature religion strain in “the American religion” through its expressions in conceptions of the unconscious in American psychology to the present popular cultural religious interest, one which he sees as a (1986, p. 185) “repackaging of indigenous spirituality”.

This is not the American religious tradition of innerworldly asceticism, the Ben Franklinism which Weber (1958) described in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The unconscious is a good place to find it, for it has been a subterranean tradition punctuated by intense, though isolated, moments of fervor or expressed obliquely in ephemeral revivalist movements. But there is evidently no easy rolling back and reversal of the sixties cultural movement, making it just another temporary tent meeting of mind-curists and mesmerists, as Lasch (1991) caricatured the New Age movements. Instead, as we see in Wuthnow’s account, there have been profound changes in the form and content of American religious expression over these past three decades.

The sixties was the watershed time, not merely of a recovery of muted American traditions of mystical spirituality, but of the eruption of different forms of experience directed precisely against the American version of orderly

modernism and so prefiguring the innerworldly mysticism that was antithetical to the hegemonic innerworldly asceticism that Weber so prophetically analyzed as the cultural basis of modernity. Fuller (2000, in press) amplifies his earlier history of an 'aesthetic spirituality', or 'mystical piety', sublimated in conceptions of the unconscious as it is represented 'scientifically' in academic psychology. For him, the "unchurched spirituality" that Wuthnow explained as an effect of the anomic complexities and "fluidity" of the social times is directly instigated by Baby Boomer's drug use (2000, p. 4):

More specifically, I will argue that the Baby Boomers' acquaintance with these drugs played an important role in popularizing a form of spirituality that emphasizes both the pluralistic and the symbolic nature of religious truth, monistic ideas of god, and the primacy of the 'private' sphere of religious experience.

In this view that the quest for "metaphysical illumination", the "inner light" which Aldous Huxley found taking mescaline in Los Angeles, was at first a direct result of drugs and then later interpreted religiously and disseminated as a mystical spirituality, where religion rather than drug ingestion becomes the basis of illumination. "Turn on, tune in, and drop out," proclaimed the late Timothy Leary. Fuller interprets Leary as going beyond the drug-induced alteration of perception to a mind-altered state of expanded consciousness (2000, p. 9):

Yet for Leary, sense and sensuality have a sacramental quality to them. Turning on was thus a form of nature religion. Turning on was intended to celebrate the intrinsic delight to be found by becoming especially receptive to the sensations emanating from the pristine depths of nature.

And, lest the wider cultural meaning of this view be lost, Fuller adds (2000, p. 11):

Common to these urges to drop out was a pervasive rejection of modernism and the grip it held on American culture.

Nor was the drug effect limited to more psychedelics (2000, p. 15):

The marijuana 'high' floods the sense and deepens a person's appreciation of *interiority* (emphasis added). In the way marijuana facilitated the Baby Boomers' growing identification of religion as the inner-directed pursuit of personal mystical experience . . . . The cultural history of marijuana in the late twentieth century is thus very much the history of unchurched American spirituality.

The upshot is, according to one user: "Religion is the altered state of consciousness." Even as the drug instigation of mysticism receded, the interpretive or "ideological reorientation" toward mystical belief as the code of meaning for perceptions of so-called expanded consciousness remained as part of the

“spiritual awakening of the 1960s” of the “various mystical philosophies that made up the era’s alternative spirituality (and that were in large part the nucleus of the ‘New Age’ spirituality of the 1980s and 1990s)” (2000, p. 20). The mystical coding of this experience, of this consciousness, even drew some cultural sustenance from the earlier tradition of American spirituality. “Beginning with Huxley,” Fuller writes (2000, p. 26), “users of psychedelics attributed metaphysical importance to their visions of bright light, their feelings of vibrations, and their sense of being enveloped by an ineffable presence”.

The sixties drug transgression of socially conventional perception inscribed the preexisting belief of the American religion in an “immanent presence of the sacred” in the “human heart and natural world” more indelibly than a revivalist campaign. It offered a model of a cultural and social alternative that was based in a very different, unmodern, direct individual perception of an inner recharting of experience along the lines of mystical traditions. It was a precursor, a “nucleus”, of the alternative model of social life, the everyday or ‘innerworldly’ mysticism for which, as I have suggested, social structural changes increasingly set the conditions in a mystical society.

#### *William James: Over the Threshold to Mystical Revitalization*

The drug-inspired new perceptions of reality and discovery of new and ‘ecstatic’ dimensions of intellectual and emotional inner experience were a radical disruption of the ordinary social definitions and routines of mid-century, American style modernity. But, as Fuller has shown (1986, 2000), the new modality of meaning was continuous with, though perhaps not derived from, an older American tradition which defined an expanded awareness as consciousness of the presence of a sacred, godly immanent being as the essential foundation of the natural world. William James, better known for his philosophy of Pragmatism and his academically-originating empirical psychology, is also the best known forbearer of this American nature religion of immanent spirituality.

James already displays, at the beginning of the twentieth century, both core elements of our contemporary, emerging mystical society as well as some of the limitations in the American perspective. The advance toward mysticism is in James’ canonical, empirical descriptions of a variety of such experiences in his *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902, 1982, 1985), in his relentless curiosity to analyze the phenomenology of mysticism and in his willingness to assert his own ‘overbelief’ in the “more” of transcendental being. He follows the accounts of other scientific and religious ‘seekers’ such as Leuba, Myers, and Fechner. He trusts the value of his own experience, trying nitrous oxide, his own time’s version of marijuana. And, most valuable for us, he pursues the

phenomenology of direct experience, the individual-cosmic relation that defines the religious experience.

In this sense, he exemplifies one of the structural bases of contemporary tendencies toward a socially mystical being, namely, the un-mediation and the boundarylessness of the self which I and others (Barglow, 1994; Castells, 1996) have suggested is generated within the societal-technological organization of the information age. But, for James, like his spiritual descendants in the psychedelic sixties, this is understood largely in *individual* terms as a description of inner individual experience that is caused by an alteration, we have said a demediation, in the boundary between the conscious awareness of the experiencing individual and the surrounding field of energy/consciousness that also includes the cosmic. This demediation or debounding is what I see as an initial element in a more inclusive set of practices, which constitute a social model.

We want to go beyond the bounds of James' boundarylessness, not only to describe more fully the causal conditions of this state, but also to specify more extensively the dynamic processes of relation and interaction that occur in the unmediated, unbounded "close contact" of the individual with the higher self of "the More". The importance of James for this purpose is that he underlines and describes this first condition of unbounding the self and further, that he locates the generation of individual energy in such states, seeing mystical experience as the basis for ongoing individual revitalization.

In one of the last essays he wrote before his death in 1910, James encapsulated the heart of the experiential religious 'conversions' and mystical moments which he had recounted in case fashion a decade earlier. He offers "A Suggestion About Mysticism" (1971, p. 204):

The suggestion, stated very briefly, is that states of mystical intuition may be only very sudden and great extensions of the ordinary 'field of consciousness' . . . but the extensions would, if my view be correct, consist in an immense spreading of the margin of the field, so that knowledge ordinarily transmarginal would become included, and the ordinary margin would grow more central.

He apparently eschews explanation of this alteration of consciousness (1971, p. 204): "Concerning the causes of such extensions I have no suggestion to make . . .". But he does offer his understanding that what it consists in is a "fall in the threshold" (1971, p. 205),

a movement of the threshold downwards . . . enlargement of the nimbus that surrounds the sensational present . . . we shall have the conditions fulfilled for a kind of consciousness in all essential respects like that termed mystical . . . (p. 206). It will be of rarity, enlargement, and illumination, possibly rapturously so. It will be of unification . . . and the sense of *relation* will be greatly enhanced. Its form will be intuitive or perceptual, not conceptual . . . (p. 207) *uncovering* of some sort is the essence of the phenomenon . . .

And for the unboundedness, he tells his dream where (1971, p. 208) "... in this experience all was diffusion from a centre ... Unless I can *attach* them, I am swept out to sea with no horizon and no bond ...".

Barnard's (1997) contemporary account of James as mystical philosopher reinforces this view, I believe. The philosopher-physician-psychologist is seen as an "explorer of unseen worlds" and the emphasis on debounding is supported by Barnard (1997, p. 16):

Spiritual techniques strip the would-be mystics of their sense of self, and this dissolution of the boundaries that define the self opens up the possibility of an influx of heightened awareness from a transnatural source.

In this continuous ebb and flow of our awareness, the 'horizons' or 'margins' of consciousness lack specific boundaries ...

Perceptual alteration of boundaries also has a wider, emotional, almost organic concomitant (1997, pp. 73–74): "... mystical states of awareness have the capacity to *revitalize life* (emphasis added) ...". The "self surrender" of the "personal boundary" is a (1997, p. 179) "... way in which human beings are able to access their reserves of inner energy ...". There is an "inherent potency of these mystical experiences ...". And then, quoting James (1997, p. 183):

... as if an extraneous higher power has flooded in and taken possession. Moreover, the *sense of renovation* (emphasis added), safety, cleanness, rightness can be so marvelous and jubilant as well to warrant one's belief in a radically new substantial nature.

The experience provides a "new centre of personal energy", a state (quoting James, 1997, p. 183): "... of confidence, trust, union with all things ... this is the Faith-state ...". The "abandonment of self-responsibility" which opens the doors of perception and emotion – of joy, confidence, equanimity and harmonious trust – has the ironic effect of revitalizing individual energies.

Barnard expressly acknowledges the similarity between Jamesian field mysticism and the Eastern traditions, particularly Hindu Tantrism (1997, p. 207):

... a nondual reworking of this field model of the self and reality creates numerous points of connection between James' work and several other nondual metaphysical systems (of which the Tantric understandings, with their focus on unity-within-diversity and the vibratory nature of reality and consciousness, are perhaps the best 'match.')

He goes on to describe (1997, p. 240):

... these traditions, those who are rooted in this nondual awareness have no need or desire to close their eyes ... whether eating, drinking, making love, or talking with friends, the enlightened being continually swims and dances in the ecstasy of the natural state, a state in which a consciousness of underlying unity is fully interwoven with an awareness of the uniqueness and wonder of diversity.

## INTERACTION

### *Hindu Tantrism: New Dynamics of Embodied Mystical Mediation*

I have suggested that James and the American nature mystics open the doors of perception beyond the desiccated cognitive ego, over the threshold of conventional conceptions, to contact with the immanent being of a higher, cosmic Self, a transcendental “More” who offers a joyous and calm revitalization of individual being. But the relation ‘between’ the self and cosmos, the direct experience of lowered thresholds is in itself, in the most general if not reified terms, the source of the influx of beneficent energies. For all its esoteric complexities, which one would not want to reduce to the current fashion of sex manual level of appropriation, even the amateur outsider can see in various contemporary articulations of certain Hindu traditions precisely this specification of the dynamics, if not the “equations” (White, 1996) of the transformations of being – transformations which occur as re-mediated, beyond the bounds of boundless selfhood.

Further, these processes of a re-mediated dynamism form a “meso” level between the micro and macro, as referred to by White. Here the mediations are specified. But they are not the mediation of Western modernity, where sociology only mimes the popular reification by calling it “culture”. Instead there are complex interchanges, across media, between the human and the cosmic, as well as interhumanly. These interchanges are classically described by Silburn (1988) as transformations of energy and by White (1996) as complex equations which analogize the human and the divine bodies. Embodied transformative interchanges are not only, as in the American Religion, the energizing product of direct contact, but ritualized practices of sequential realization of this-worldly enlightenment that are parallel, but differentially embodied in alchemy, yoga, and tantric sexual intercourse.

The aim is not the “faith-state” of only the revitalization of centres of personal energy, but of immortality itself – through transmutational reversals of energy-creating fluids of the body of the person, the world and the divine cosmos. It is not only about dropping the boundary, but of ritualizing the knowledge of the transactions that take place across lowered thresholds and of their effects toward such a profound alteration of being that it can be seen as an altogether different, divine enlightenment or even near-death state in life – an open-eyed samadhi. To boundarylessness and revitalization of feeling and energy is added here embodied, ritual practices of transformative interaction. Beyond the post-modern destruction of mediation, we can see here at least exemplars of an alternative mediation, not of alienating desiccation – as we have criticized

modernity and postmodernity both – but of embodied, this-worldly enlightenment to the point of immortality. This esoteric Hinduism is so quickly appropriated and mass packaged in the postmodern ‘West’ perhaps because we can glimpse within it detailed social methods for the realization of full being that are consistent with the ‘flow’ of postmodern transmutability.

In complete contradistinction to the “mechanical petrification” of the alienated and dispersed self-body, Silburn (1988) describes the energy-body of kundalini in which the difference between energy and consciousness is dissipated in a dynamic “twin movement of separation and return” (1988, p. 11), of a vibrating universe of pulsation to whose unity the practitioner is reintegrated. Such a self of simultaneous moving energy/consciousness vibration and immobilized total integration resolves the informational society’s contradictory requirement for a motivated, agentic, and individualized location of self action (not too alienated in fragmentation and dispersal to act) and a fluidity of movement that de-essentializes matter into the very movement of the universe itself. This process, as Silburn describes the dynamics of kundalini, is not simply a lowered threshold, but a loosening and untying of the blocking knots of embodied energy-centers. What opens is not only a more confident perception into the “oceanic” margins of consciousness, but (1988, p. 30):

When the universal Kundalini regains her spontaneous activity, one enjoys the tide of the ocean of life, with its perpetual ebb and flow of emanations and withdrawals.

The surging back of all the energies to the center . . . a retraction (1988, pp. 51–52) . . . He remains unmoved at the Center, like the foundation of the world, never losing contact with the inner Reality. Enjoying the samadhi with open eyes, he unfolds the cosmos anew . . . Filled with wonder, the yogin recognizes the Self in its universal nature and identifies with Siva.

For the yogin resides at the source of the movements of emanation and resorption of the universe... this realm of bliss has some connection with sexual experience . . . the organs are subjected to a similar contraction and expansion conducive to an intimate union . . . all is still, time is no more (1988, pp. 58–59).

The tantrism described by Silburn is a this-worldly practice of energy release and process of back and forth, emanation and resorption of individual/divine relation in energy and awareness. “In Tantrism,” she writes (1988, p. 138), “indeed, unification must be achieved in the course of ordinary life experiences, whatever they may be . . .” (1988, p. 207). “. . . Kundalini energy tears away from duality, unifies, universalizes and transfigures . . . worldly energy turns into all-pervading consciousness.”

Gordon White’s (1996) analysis of Hinduism includes the traditions of the Siddha alchemy, yoga and tantra. His “alchemical body” is a “divinized body”, alchemical not only in the direct metallurgical analogy, but also in its continual

transmutation of substance – of semen, breath, energy and consciousness – in the service of a living immortality. Like Silburn, he portrays a vibrational universe of energy movements (1996, p. 219):

In tantric metaphysic, it is the kundalini's coiled body itself that is the turning point between emanation and participation, emission and resorption.

And again, (1996, p. 263):

... the tantric universe was a unified system that oscillated between withdrawal (nivritti) and return (pravritti) on the part of a cosmic yogin, between effulgence (prakasa) and reflection (vimarsa) on the part of supreme consciousness, between emission and resorption, etc.

Lastly, Hindu alchemy is tantric in its goals and in the means it appropriates to realize those goals. Total autonomy, omniscience, superhuman powers, bodily immortality, and a virtual identification with godhead – ... The tantric universe is a *pulsating, vibratory* universe, in which matter, souls and sound are the stuff of the outpouring of godhead into manifestation ... It is a *bipolar, sexualized* universe, in which all change and transformation are viewed as so many instances of an interpenetration of male and female principles ... It is a *radiating* universe ... (1996, p. 143).

Siddha practice is sequential and White offers a description of the phases of types of activity. Here in relation to the goal of “immobilization” (1996, p. 174):

What a difficult, even heroic undertaking the immobilization of the body constitutes, yet what fantastic results it yields. For immobilization leads to reversal, reversal to transformation, and transformation is tantamount to bodily immortality, and precisely, to the supernatural ability to transform, reverse, or immobilize whatever one desires in the physical world (siddhi).

In these accounts, Esoteric Hinduism and notably tantrism, provide a model of ritualized and therefore social, however ‘supernatural’ sounding, practices to produce a “divinized body” by interchanges of substances (semen, breath) internal and external. It is consciously a this-worldly or “everyday mysticism” in the sense that both the social origins of its practitioners (according to White) and a text-based religious hierarchy are rejected in favor of a living enlightenment achieved through transmutational interchanges. The sacred immanence and cosmic “presence” of the American Religion is here activated, well beyond perception and contact to dynamic interchange, and specified by substantial medium and method of transformation within a larger living, vibrational framework of the energy and awareness of a cosmic Self.

Contemporary Western borrowings and selective adaptations from these alchemical energy mystery traditions can of course be discounted as further commodifying colonization of even the more opaque aspects of the so-called non-Western world to new colonial infocapital. Alternatively, sympathy and



even glimmers of understanding of siddha, kundalini and tantric traditions can be taken as an inchoate, quasi-conscious resonance, a newer sort of “elective affinity”, to use Weber’s phrase. The affinity is to an already-charted map and methodology of interactional transformational self-deification and immortality. This is a map that can be overlain particularly on the American self-help techniques movement resuscitated within the sixties cultural shifts. It builds on the assumptions of the American religion, provides on the surface a technology that might be deracinated from traditional ritual locations in order to realize the meso, intermediary level of mediating practice; a level which postmodernism diminishes without surrendering its teleology of materialized, individualized deifying immortality – the new accumulation of capital – within a field of transmutation that goes well beyond simple “flexibility” as a key modality of being in the world of postindustrial informationalism.

## SOCIETY

### *Hasidism: Individual Redemption and Collective Messianism*

Jewish mysticism adds a messianic element to the recognizable debounding and back and forth transformations of these varieties of contemporary mysticism and even attempts to link the transformed body and soul of saintly inner experience to historic movements of collective, social transformation. While the preeminent contemporary scholar of Jewish mysticism, Moshe Idel (1998, 1995), echoes the general view of Hasidism as individually redemptive, simultaneously he blurs the traditional line of distinction between mysticism and messianism by suggesting that inner mystical experiences may be integral and initial aspects of messianic, historic social movements. As Idel puts it (1998, p. 37):

The following proposal is therefore intended to address decisive moments of inner experience that may *precede* (emphasis added) the emergence of these collective manifestations.

His panorama is much wider than Hasidism, spanning the history of Jewish mysticism, in a series of studies of the variants of Kabbalah. Despite differences of interpretation, Idel’s studies of Hasidism within the larger mystical trajectory and the vast literature of specifically Hasidic studies (Idel, 1995; Loewenthal, 1990; Elior, 1993; Schatz-Uffenheimer, 1993; Buber, 1958; Scholem, 1971; for example), reveal a common core of understanding, which Scholem (1991) referred to as “the highest form of applied Jewish mysticism”. Idel echoes this evaluation, calling Hasidism (1995, p. 212) “the most influential form of Jewish mysticism”. In all of their works, again, despite the

many disagreements (see Idel, 1995, for a review of the major debates), there emerges a common portrait.

Whether Hasidism is a continuation of Lurianic Kabbalah in a more individualized, democratic, practical form or if it more directly incorporates ancient and medieval magical elements; whether it fully deflects earlier messianism in favor of use as an individualistic soteriology or is, as Idel suggests, less “apocalyptic,” there is a recognizable social practice of mystical transformation – even among the historical and current factions of Hasidism. After all, Hasidism is in many ways (as Sharot argued, 1982) a relatively decentralized “revitalization movement” which centers around the feudal-style courts of ‘tzaddikim’ or saints. Idel described these saints as shamans, serving as channels or “pipes” for the distribution of the supernal influx to the wider community of everyday followers. In this sense, as Loewenthal (1990) shows, there is a “communication ethos”, notably in Habad Hasidism, where neither direct religious experience nor inter-mediation of a this-worldly, other-worldly bridging saint inhibits the inter-subjectivity and communal character of both individual redemption in exile, as well as more collective messianic aspirations.

This social communication or intersubjectivity derives from the emphasis on communion with the godhead and the long records of a various “ascents” beyond the material world. The value for Hasidism, however, is not only the to and fro of ritualized mystical practice, in the tzaddik-follower or ‘hasid’ relation or the actual bodily prayer practice, but in the ethos of “descent” or return to the material, corporeal, communal social world of the here and now. Like tantrism, with a very different theosophy, the everyday is the site of mystical practice, with a goal of ‘service or worship through materiality’. The derivation from the earlier Lurianic mysticism is in the reintegrative ideal, where, for ‘heaven’s sake’, the initial destructive dispersion of a unified holiness is re-collected, re-assembled by an intentional elevation of mundane activity to holiness. Here too, as in Jamesian jubilation, there is a commitment to an ‘ecstatic fervor’, a revolt against ‘rabbinism’, as Buber saw it, against textualism (at least in the earliest stages of the movement’s history) in favor of a joyful wisdom of everyday resacralization. And here we find the ideal of self-surrender, self-abnegation for divine purpose, which attracts or draws down the energy of a supernal source to the channeling saint, and so, to a wider community.

Idel’s important recent departure is to argue for the relevance of apparently individualized mysticism to collectively oriented messianism. As he puts it (1998, p. 172):

The complete reconstruction of the supernal Adam, of the divine anthropos, is therefore an eschatological and cosmic project which involves automatically a preceding personal redemption.

It is the "mission . . . of the mystic, to reenact the lost perfection" (1998; p. 187).

Underlining further the mystical precedent in relation to messianism, Idel notes: (1998, p. 292):

It is less a matter or re-creation as one of creation that haunted the Jewish mystic in search of the peak experience that is conducive to messianism.

### *Secular Mysticism*

The tension between mysticism and messianism, between the individual inner experience and the collective social action, is expressed not only in debates about the character of historical and contemporaneous Jewish mysticism. In academic, religiously-neutral social science and philosophy, the ahistorical, decontextualized approach is represented by the view of mysticism as an "innate capacity" (Forman, 1998). Forman argues for a 'PCE', a pure consciousness event, as the modal form of mystical experience. He represents the anti-contextualist, even "decontextualized" view of mysticism (1998, p. 30):

Furthermore, the general outlines of the transformative process are reasonably consistent across cultures. The key feature of the transformative process is stripping or letting go of concepts, attachments, and pictures of one's self and others.

He reiterates James' notion of "uncovering" "something that they have been all along . . ." (1998, p. 31), an "innate capacity". Indeed, Forman reminds us that "nearly half" of all Americans and British people "have had one or more mystical experiences".

Gimello (1983), on the other hand, writing within Katz' collection of 'contextualist' studies of mysticism, asserts (1983, p. 84):

Mysticism does not stand apart from the 'lay world' of duty, station, prudence, 'law and order', labour, etc. It is woven together with all these things into a whole pattern or 'form of life', and the institutions *within which* it flourishes help to give it its particular character . . . those social, political, economic and legal contexts which have nurtured mystics in all cultures and at all times.

Secular intellectuals have long debated the character of mystical experience. Freud (1930), of course, saw religion as regressive and reduced his friend Romain Rolland's accounts of the "eternal present" to a regressive "oceanic feeling" (see Parsons, 1998). Rolland's literary descriptions of his discovery of "Being" of a joyful unity are juxtaposed by Parsons to James' transient experience. Rolland's "constant state" (1998, p. 513), a "continuous feeling of contact" is much more than Freud's allusion (1998, p. 514) to a "rare . . . state of ecstasy". Parsons calls on Kohut's psychodynamic explanation of mysticism

as a “cosmic narcissism” (1998, p. 523). As Parsons integrates Rolland and Kohut (1998, p. 523):

Through mystical experience, introspection, renunciation, and what Rolland called the ‘blows of life’, one gradually *decathects* (emphasis added) the self, displacing the locus of identity from self to Self conceived as contentless and superordinate.

Merkur’s recent (1999) exposition of a theory of mysticism draws from these secular, social scientific, psychodynamic traditions to argue that (ix): “Mystical experiences occur when recent achievements of unconscious unitive thinking manifest consciously as a momentary inspiration.” For Merkur, “. . . in some sense we are all of us mystics”. He offers a psychological typology of the elements of mysticism as “a heightened awareness of otherwise ordinary, everyday unitive thinking” (1999, p. 38). Even science is an accommodation of the drive for unitive thinking to the “impersonalism of the external world” (1999, p. 40). The root is an “unconscious mysticism: which is expressed when there is a “relaxation of resistance” (1999, p. 130).

But, in secular mysticism too, the historical social structural determination of experience is neglected in favor of individual, psychodynamic models of mystical experience. It remains an eruption, a relaxation, an inspiration in the boundary of the individual/environmental relation. Our suggestion that the socially structured world that emerges after postmodernism now brings these traditions together and to the forefront of our consciousness is also a secular, though less individualistic, variety of a contemporary social secular mysticism. Perhaps we are, as Merkur asserts, “all of us mystics”. We do not, however, make this new everyday innerworldly mysticism just as we please, but in terms and conditions that we inherit from the past.

## REFERENCES

- Allen, G. W. (1971). *A William James Reader*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Bannet, E. T. (1992). Marx, God and Praxis. In: P. Berry & A. Wernick (Eds), *Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion* (pp. 123–134). London and New York: Routledge.
- Barnard, G. W. (1997). *Exploring Unseen Worlds: William James and the Philosophy of Mysticism*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Buber, M. (1958). *Hasidism and Modern Man*. New York: Horizon Press.
- Buber, M. (1958). *I and Thou*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.
- Buber, M. (1967). *On Judaism*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Castells, M. (1996). *The Rise of Network Society*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc.
- Classen, C. (1998). *The Color of Angels: Cosmology, Gender, and The Aesthetic Imagination*. New York: Routledge Publishers.
- DeLeon-Jones, K. S. (1997). *Giordano Bruno and The Kabbalah: Prophets, Magicians, and Rabbis*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press.

- Durkheim, E. (1995). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, K. E. Fields (Trans.). New York: The Free Press.
- Eliade, M. (1957). *The Sacred & The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, W. R. Trask (Trans.). San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace & Company.
- Eliade, M. (1969). *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Elior, R. (1993). *The Paradoxical Ascent to God: The Kabbalistic Theosophy of Habad Hasidism*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Forman, R. K. (Ed.) (1998). *The Innate Capacity: Mysticism, Psychology, and Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fuller, R. C. (1986). *Americans and the Unconscious*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fuller, R. C. (2000). *Stairways to Heaven*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, in press.
- Gergen, K. J. (1991). *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gimello, R. (1983). *Mysticism in Its Contexts in Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, S. Katz (Ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Happold, F. C. (1970). *Mysticism: A Study and an Anthology*. London: Penguin Books.
- Harvey, D. (1989). *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell Inc.
- Heelas, P. (1996). *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc.
- Idel, M. (1995). *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Idel, M. (1988). *Kabbalah: New Perspective*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Idel, M. (1998). *Messianic Mystics*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press.
- James, W. (1982, 1985[1902]). *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York and London: Penguin Classics.
- James, W. (1971). A Suggestion About Mysticism.
- Katz, S. (Ed.) (1983). *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Loewenthal, N. (1990). *Communicating the Infinite: The Emergence of the Habad School*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- Melucci, A. (1996). *The Playing Self: Person and Meaning in the Planetary Society*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Merkur, D. (1993). *Gnosis: An Esoteric Tradition of Mystical Visions and Unions*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Merkur, D. (1999). *Mystical Moments and Unitive Thinking*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Ollman, B. (1971). *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Parsons, W. (1998). The Oceanic Feeling Revisited. In: *The Journal of Religion* (pp. 501–523). Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Rapoport-Albert, A. (Ed.) (1996). *Hasidism Reappraised*. London and Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- Roof, W. C. (1993). *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Scholem, G. (1971). *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Scholem, G. (1991). *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Seremetakis, N. C. (1994). *The Senses Still*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

- Sharot, S. (1982). *Messianism, Mysticism, and Magic: A Sociological Analysis of Jewish Religious Movements*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Silburn, L. (1988). *Kundalini: Energy of the Depths*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Stein, P. (1999). *Magics of the Flesh*. University of Rochester, unpublished manuscript.
- Stein, P. (1997). *Practicing Eternity*. University of Rochester, unpublished manuscript.
- Thompson, K. (1990). Secularization and Sacralization. In: *Rethinking Progress: Movements, Forces, and Ideas at the End of the 20th Century*. Boston, London, Sydney, Wellington: Unwin Hyman.
- Uffenheimer, R. S. (1993). *Hasidism as Mysticism: Quietistic Elements in Eighteenth Century Hasidic Thought*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Weber, M. (1964, 1991). *The Sociology of Religion*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Weber, M. (1946). *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, H. H. Gerth & C. W. Mills (Trans., Eds, Introduction). New York, Oxford University Press.
- Weber, M. (1958). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Charles Scribner and Sons.
- Wexler, P. (1998). Reselfing After Postmodern Culture: Sacred Social Psychology. In: *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Wexler, P. (1996). *Holy Sparks: Social Theory, Education and Religion*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Wexler, P. (2000). *Religion, Education and Society*. In preparation.
- White, D. G. (1996). *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Wuthnow, R. (1998). *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.

# FANON SPEAKS TO THE SUBALTERN

Valerie L. Scatamburlo-D'Annibale  
and Lauren Langman

## ABSTRACT

*In recent years there has been a veritable explosion in Fanonian studies and this would be a welcome development given the scope and depth of Fanon's insights. Unfortunately, Fanon's work itself has been "post-alized" in recent years especially in the Western literary academy. This exploration of Fanon's work has, for the most part, been in the form of "textual" analyses which tend to obfuscate the radical humanistic underpinnings of Fanon's writings. Many postcolonial and postmodern discourses which have appropriated Fanon to buttress their valorization of "difference" and "identity politics" in an era hostile to universalism and humanism have, in effect, excised the critical, normative, and revolutionary humanist vision which informs Fanon's oeuvre. As such, these renderings have robbed Fanon's work of the critical insights and interpretive frameworks that it offers in confronting some of the pressing issues of our day: questions of identity politics, difference, class, agency, political struggle, etc. The intent of this paper is to argue that Fanon offers a dialectical framework for discerning relationships of identity as ideological constructions which mediate between structurally located hegemonic blocs and the consciousness of empirical subjects, and, which clearly situates identity and difference within broader networks of*

---

**Bringing Capitalism Back for Critique by Social Theory, Volume 21, pages 253–284.**  
Copyright © 2002 by Elsevier Science Ltd.  
All rights of reproduction in any form reserved.  
ISBN: 0-7623-0762-5

*domination and exploitation by navigating a course between the Structure/agency; humanism/anti-humanism binaries that have dominated contemporary social thought.*

## INTRODUCTION

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule (Benjamin, 1969, p. 257).

Walter Benjamin's riveting observation provides a reminder that the "state of emergency" and the conditions of degradation and subordination are pervasive. They are, in short, the rule rather than the exception. However, even a cursory glance at the contemporary social landscape seems to suggest that the state of emergency has somehow intensified. Transnational capitalism, in its triumphal moment, belies growing contradictions and immiseration. As we begin a new millennium, the financial pundits of *Fortune* and *Business Week* boast about the record profits of corporate enterprise, the most prosperous time in history which saw the net worth of capitalist moguls explode. While the material conditions of large sectors of the population continue to deteriorate. At the present historical juncture, approximately thirty-five million Americans live below the poverty line; more than seven million are unemployed; real wages for average workers are plummeting; and the chasm between rich and poor continues to widen (Chomsky, 1995; Parenti, 1996).

For countless citizens, the everyday struggles for mere sustenance have been vitiated by the greed of a predatory global capitalism which lurks furtively in search of its next victim. The results of financial speculation, de-industrialization, the computerization of work, the globalization of post Fordist flexible production and the proliferation of ill paid service jobs have meant the loss of well paid middle income jobs and widespread hardship for the majority of people (Aronowitz, 1994). This has led to a dramatic decline in the number of unskilled, blue-collar jobs that used to give young workers a start in life. In 1979, 23% of male workers between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four earned wages below the poverty line, by 1990 the percentage of this cohort earning poverty wages skyrocketed to 43%. Despite the seeming prosperity of the neo-liberal era, inequality is rapidly growing and our society is fast becoming a two-tier society or double-diamond system in which a small upper class enjoys six- to seven-figure wealth, while the growing majority find it harder and harder to cope (Perruci & Wyansong, 1999). For large sectors of society, especially the underclasses, the "truly disadvantaged," indeed the "wretched of the earth," much work, even at minimum wage has disappeared (Wilson, 1996). In black communities, family income fell by 50% between



1965 and 1990 while black youth unemployment quadrupled (Lipsitz, 1994, pp. 18–19).

Of course, social relations of oppression and alienation have always existed. But what makes this moment particularly invidious is the resurgence of New Right forces (in the form of George W. Bush's administration) armed with initiatives designed to exacerbate the already deplorable circumstances of millions of Americans. The recently "installed" administration is seeking to lead the American public down a path that will be golden for a few and perilous for most. Some of the draconian measures passed during the Clinton regime are being pushed even further to the Right. In the guise of fiscal restraint and alleged economic stimulation, New Right scions have colluded with neo-liberal forces to launch an all-out assault on what little remains of the social safety net by targeting programs intended to assist the working-classes as well as the disadvantaged and impoverished while offering lucrative tax breaks to the wealthy. The war on poverty has given way to a war on the poverty-stricken. The new ethos seems to be "take from the needy and give to the greedy" (Parenti, 1996, p. 27).

Moreover, like the "Know-Nothings" of the mid-nineteenth century, whose call to arms was a defense of "real" Americans against the invasion of immigrants, the strategy of contemporary right wing extremism relies on similar methods of demonizing and dehumanizing the "other(s)" and exploiting the "natural fear of difference" – a strategy that Umberto Eco (1995, p. 58) equates with the early stages of fascism. Capitalizing on the widespread "white panic" promulgated largely by the mainstream media, the right wing has racialized welfare recipients, criminals and substance abuse, that is they have demonized non-whites as drug addicts, gang warriors and undesirable, criminal elements.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, in the endless barrage of mass mediated images, racial coding plays a pivotal role in the stigmatization and criminalization of non-whites. The white-controlled media (often assisted by victim-blaming white social scientists) have tended to ignore the economic and social conditions responsible for bringing about in many minority communities what Cornel West (cited in Stephanson, 1988, p. 276) has called a "walking nihilism" and forms of social pathology. Furthermore, this demonization serves

the strategic purposes of neo-conservatives who have fashioned a counter-subversive electoral coalition against affirmative action, enforcement of civil rights laws and help for the poor . . . counter-subversives need demonized enemies to justify their own repressive and authoritarian desires. They also need a smoke screen to divert attention away from the dire consequences of their own policies, from the evisceration of the welfare system and from the depletion of the nation's social capital engendered by twenty years of direct and indirect subsidies to the wealthy (Lipsitz, 1994, p. 19).

As many whites continue to feel the effects of downward mobility in the grim Hobbesian climate of late capitalism, they are more apt to fall prey to reactionary and fascist tendencies which create new *enemies within* – Blacks, Latinos, immigrants, and other imaginary foes who are then scapegoated for conditions which are largely the result of shifts in global capitalism, post Fordist tendencies and the avarice of the wealthy few. This “divide and conquer” strategy obfuscates the realities of life under global capitalism, blurs the actual structures of power and privilege, and creates tensions between oppressed groups that actually share common, concrete material interests (Marable, 1995, p. 8).

Despite this sobering context and the urgent need to cultivate a progressive political agenda to combat the regressive forces of the New Right and multinational global capitalism, we are instead witnessing the entrenchment of conservatism and the growth of fascism in our midst. Concomitantly, whatever remains of the Left appears to be enamored with the cultural and thus are blind to the political, seduced by the textual yet oblivious to the material, enchanted by difference and hostile to solidarity – a Left in short that has been willing to embrace a form of identity politics that has dissolved resistance into the totalizing power of capitalist exploitation. Yet, as Cornel West (1993, p. 240) aptly notes, if all we “have are identity politics . . . then capital, now with hardly any barriers, will rule supreme, leaving more dead bodies, and more wasted energies.” In light of these precarious circumstances the obvious question surfaces: What is to be done? To such a question, there is no simple answer and we therefore do not purport to provide definitive answers, irrefutable proofs or tidy solutions to theoretical foibles and political woes. Such efforts would be an exercise in futility. Nonetheless, we do want to argue that the revolutionary thrust of Frantz Fanon’s work that locates identity formations within a historically specific material context provides a solid foundation from which to analyze and critically assess what we perceive to be a number of shortcomings in contemporary social theory and postmodern politics. More significantly we believe that Fanon can still speak forcefully and eloquently to those committed to confronting and relentlessly interrogating oppression and subjugation in all its many and varied manifestations. Indeed, we began this essay with a quote from Benjamin because we agree with Bhabba’s (1994, p. 41) statement that the distinctive force of Fanon’s vision comes “from the tradition of the oppressed, the language of a revolutionary awareness.” And revolutionary awareness is precisely what is needed at this critical historical juncture.

## FANON AND THE POSTMODERN

If the building of the bridge does not enrich the awareness of those who work on it, then that bridge ought not to be built . . . the bridge should not be “parachuted down” from

above; it should not be imposed by a “*deus ex machina*” upon the social scene; on the contrary it should come from the muscles and brains of the citizens (Fanon, 1961, pp. 200–201).

If one were to interpret the “bridge” Fanon discusses as a metaphor for theory, it could be argued that any theory which does not serve the interest of the “people,” which does not illuminate the materiality and lived realities of the oppressed, and articulate the potential for their transformation, ought not to be constructed for theory is of little use if does not help us imagine, struggle for, and then realize better futures. Sadly enough, one of the defining characteristics of the contemporary Left today is an obsessive fascination with theories which are, for the most part, far removed from the concrete concerns of public life and the materiality of everyday existence. In fact, Stabile (1995, p. 121) points to the insular nature of most contemporary theorizing while Norris (1990, p. 44) goes even further to suggest that theory (especially of the post-modern variety) has served as an “escape route from pressing political questions and a pretext for avoiding serious engagement with real-world historical events.” Under the spell of Parisian provocateurs, the “text” has become the “marionette theatre of the political” (Gates, 1992, p. 97). Pseudo-Leftists liken the deconstruction of texts to political activism while others equate “resistance” with the politics of pleasure and the excesses of *jouissance*. This Disneyfication of the Left lends itself to a situation where self-proclaimed radicals create a simulation of social movements, an intellectual pseudo-politics where the production of theory and the textual displacement of hegemonic codes are deemed politically useful in and of themselves – a posturing that often operates in a way that “implicitly empowers the theorist while explicitly dis-empowering real cultural subjects” (Turner, 1994, p. 410). In short, Nero fiddles and deconstructs texts, while Rome burns.

Lest we be accused of perpetuating those insidious forms of anti-intellectualism which have plagued American culture for decades, a few qualifying remarks are in order. Our qualms are not with theory *per se*, but rather with those kinds of “ludic” post-al theory that have come to constitute the reservoir of what is deemed radical today. Indeed, theory has become a hot commodity and many Leftist scholars have, to “suit their own purposes . . . reinvented the meaning of theory” (Christian, 1987, p. 51). Theory is no longer valued for its explanatory power or its potential to inform social change but rather for how it can be deployed to “playfully” decentre, deconstruct, or otherwise disrupt established meanings, presuppositions and regnant cultural codes. These gestures, while “radical” in the sense that they challenge and contest familiar ways of thinking, do not necessarily lead to radical mobilization or even to radical Left social critique (McLaren, 1994b; West, 1993). In several respects, ludic postmodern

theory has served to undermine progressive political agendas by limiting struggles to those over signs, significations, the textual and the discursive. This theory-as-play motif has come to dominate so-called critical social theory (Ebert, 1996; Epstein, 1996). The distinction which Ebert makes between theory-as-play and explanatory theory is an important one and as such is worth quoting at length:

Explanatory critique is fundamentally different from theory as play in that the latter addresses itself exclusively to cultural politics, understanding cultural politics as the theatre of significations . . . In opposition to theory as play, theory as explanation goes beyond cultural politics and engages the material base of the social formation that in fact conditions cultural politics. For theory as play, culture (as the staging of conflicting chains of signification) is (semi) autonomous, while theory as explanatory critique regards culture to be always articulated by material forces (Ebert, 1996, p. 15).

Furthermore, the virtual hegemony of post-al theory and its coterminous categories of indeterminability and undecidability as well as its valorization of relativism has had serious political ramifications because it leaves us without an ethical stance that provides a normative frame of reference to make political and ethical judgements. Moreover, the almost exclusive focus on the discursive and the textual and the "absolutization of language" has eschewed attention to material conditions, to the social agents of history and has ignored even the remotest connection to the multiple struggles against domination, oppression, and subordination taking place outside the academy (Eagleton, 1996; Kincheloe, 1994; Stabile, 1995).

It is within this context that we will argue for the importance of Fanon as a revolutionary political theorist whose thought is clearly grounded in the *actual lived experiences* of the colonized and not the *texts of colonialism*. His dialectical understandings of the totality of social formations and the mediations involved in those formations and processes are far more nuanced than most one-dimensional postmodern analyses. His grasp of identity formation, recognition, and the mediation of domination through the production of subaltern identities is by far much more useful to radical intellectuals than are the reductionist denials of agency and/or the simplistic celebrations of difference and identity proffered by the apostles of postmodernism. His radical understanding of enlightenment and universalism provide fruitful alternatives to those who would banish the goals of enlightenment to the dustbin of history. And finally his revolutionary humanism will not let us forget about the children of the damned, the victims of a culture of silence, the wretched of the earth. In short, it is our intention to argue that Fanon offers modes of intelligibility which are far superior to those proffered by postmodernists.

There has been a veritable explosion in Fanonian studies and this would be a welcome development given the scope and depth of Fanon's insights.

Unfortunately, Fanon's work itself has been post-alized in recent years especially in the Western literary academy. This exploration of Fanon's work has, for the most part, been in the form of "textual" analyses which tend to obfuscate the revolutionary underpinnings of Fanon's writings. Furthermore, the current fascination with Fanon has focussed mainly on his explicitly psycho-analytical work *Black Skin, White Masks* while ignoring his later works, especially *Wretched of the Earth* and *A Dying Colonialism* – this has tended to psychologize in a most reductive fashion, the political questions which Fanon encountered in his day. This is indeed unfortunate insofar as a critical psycho-analysis offers valuable insights into the mediation processes whereby material conditions and hegemonic ideologies become insinuated within the person and desire becomes colonized in ways that reproduce structures of domination (see below).

Moreover, many post-colonial and postmodern discourses which have appropriated Fanon to buttress their valorization of "difference" and "identity politics" in an era hostile to universalism and humanism have in effect excised the "critical," "normative," and "revolutionary humanist" vision which "informs his account of the colonial condition and its aftermath" (Sekyi-Otu, 1996, p. 3). As such, these renderings have robbed Fanon's work of the critical insights and interpretative frameworks that his thought offers in confronting some of the pressing issues of our day: questions of identity politics, difference, class, political struggle, etc. It is certainly true that various postmodern and post-colonial formulations have greatly expanded our understanding of the relationship between identity, language, and discursive formations; however, all too often these theoretical narratives collapse into an ahistorical self-congratulatory emphasis on the importance of naming one's location as a complex discursive site. As insightful as these theoretical forays have been, they have tended to focus so much on the textual moments of identity that questions of power have been undermined (McLaren, 1997, p. 17). Our intent then, is to argue that Fanon offers a framework for discerning relationships of identity as ideological constructions which mediate between structurally located hegemonic blocs, colonized desire and the consciousness of empirical subjects and which clearly situates identity and difference within broader networks of domination and exploitation.

## **IDENTITY, RECOGNITION, AND THE DYNAMICS OF DOMINATION**

There are enough theories and critiques of identity to fill a small library. As such it becomes necessary to carefully define terms and differentiate often confused meanings of subject, self, identity, etc. We suggest that these repre-

sent different levels of analysis that are often used interchangeably without careful definition of terms. For us:

- (1) the subject reflects an abstract concept of theoretical analysis most removed from actual lived experience. Furthermore, the subject as the focus of theoretical analysis is most typically sub-jected – from Parson's structural functionalism through to Althusser's structuralism and Foucault's post structuralism, the "over-socialized" and/or "discursive" subject, "constructed by roles", "interpellated by ideological apparatus" and/or "disciplined by texts" is denuded of agenic subjectivity and is, in essence, disembodied. Moreover, because such formulations often ignore or downplay the critical notion of mediation (see below), they often reduce the complexity of the relations between subject and structure,
- (2) Selfhood reflects the realm of actual, embodied, experience that is best understood as a locus of experience and mode of reflexive awareness of a concrete person as she/he participates in social life and enacts the various routines of the habitus. Selfhood marks the intersection of dialectical relationships between the psychological moments of development, motivation, emotion, and cognition that are intertwined with the social contexts of development and the social constructions of knowledges and understandings that are themselves shaped and mediated by historically specific, political and economic formations. Selfhood is not a stable entity or essence "within." Rather, selfhood can be seen as a collection or repertoire of variable, if not contradictory, modes of being in the world which are expressed in the articulation of socially based identity formations within which interpersonal relationships transpire,
- (3) Identity reflects a system of shared cultural narratives as well as more localized scripts of specific positions within the larger group. Identities become attributes of the concrete person and the medium through which desire impels the articulation of selfhood. Groups construct certain reflexive self images that express and valorize their distinctive qualities, customs, common meanings, goals and values. Identities are stories/narratives through which groups label and designate themselves and differentiate themselves from others. Identities operate in the lives of individuals by connecting them with some people and dividing them from others. In this regard, identities are constituted in and through their relations to one another thereby making difference constitutive of identity.

However, in complex societies, where a particular group exercises domination over another, through relations of power, conquest, or colonization, it seeks to secure ideological control over the cultural apparatuses which help to stabilize

its rule. This begins with the imposition of what Lukacs called categories of bourgeois thought and ends with what Gramsci called hegemony – a process that includes the power to control representations and construct the Other or Others upon whom denigrated identities are imposed. But further, this process involves the construction of the valorized identities of hegemonic classes which are rendered “common-sensical” and whose authority claims are represented as “natural.” Fanon recognized this practice all too well in his analysis of the colonial condition. Both the privileged identities of the *evolues* and the denigrated ones of the colonized served to entrench colonial rule.

Under French colonialism, from childhood, colonized peoples were indoctrinated with the myth that black was the symbol of all things evil. In French colonies ruled by white men, a white skin was associated with power, status, wealth, and superiority, while black skin was associated with all things negative, with illicit desire and inferiority. Fanon was aware of how colonial racism defined, distorted, and disfigured virtually every aspect of Black social existence. The systematic practice of racist oppression constructed the colonized as representations of absolute negativity. The absurdity of racial oppression forced colonized subjects to experience life as an endless series of negative social and cultural constructions which they then internalized. In this context, the colonized individual often experienced feelings of self-hatred and self-rejection.

Fanon explored in detail the dialectical relationship between white and black both as linguistic markers and enforceable definitions of people in the colonies. Color symbols had meaning for everyone, powerful and powerless, growing up under colonialism. As Mostern (1994, p. 260) notes, these colors were not merely in “dialectical relation, with the construction of the civilized white resting on the notion of a perfectly savage other – but also in Manichean relation” where colors represented good, evil, refined, crude, culture, backwardness, etc. But it is important to recognize that for Fanon the association was not simply symbolic but also rooted in social structure. Indeed, Fanon was well aware of the fact that colonialism was operationalized at both the material and the symbolic/representational levels – that it was both a political/economic relationship as well as a cultural process. Materially colonialism sought to “strengthen domination for the sake of human and economic exploitation,” while at the level of culture or representation it sought to maintain the identity of the ideological image it had created of “the colonized and of the depreciated image the colonized” had of themselves (Goldberg, 1996, p. 184). Just as Marx saw alienation in terms of socio-economic factors, Fanon too recognized that the alienation of the Negro, of the colonized, was at root socio-economic, but in addition to that, Fanon sought to illustrate how that socio-economic alienation had profound concrete psychological effects.

Fanon analyzed how institutions like schools and media served to ingrain the notion of Black inferiority in children. It was the imposition and valorization of the colonizer's education, culture, language, and values that denigrated and debased the traditional culture and its language(s), denied recognition of the colonized, fostered self-hatred among the colonized and often led the colonized to question his/her selfhood thereby producing a psychic alienation that served to disempower the colonized subject and thwart the potential for resistance. In particular, Fanon argued that the Antillean was doubly alienated – first, the Antillean did not think of him/herself as Black but rather as French for he/she had learned the language and adopted the values of the colonizer's culture. Having internalized the belief in white superiority and the ideology of white Negrophobia, the Antillean could not accept the designation "Black." However, once the Antillean ventured to Europe, he/she was struck with the fact that his/her Black body denied him/her identification with the French for in the context of France he/she was the feared and despised Other. The assimilationist illusions of the Antillean were, in short, destroyed by the gaze of metropolitan racism.

In his discussions on the National question, Gramsci (1971) noted how hegemonic processes represented Southerners as biologically inferior, stupid, lazy, criminal barbarians. In a similar way, Fanon explored the ways in which the construction of "otherness" and denigrations of identities were necessary components in forging and maintaining hegemony and securing the willing assent of subaltern and/or colonized peoples to elite/colonial rule. Through normalization or the practice of creating "common sense," colonizers were able to hide the domination, exploitation, and subordination constitutive of colonialism. By making the relations and practices of "dominance seem standard, normal, and given", colonialism created as acceptable, as normative, its "central social expressions of degradation and dehumanization" (Goldberg, 1996, p. 184). But further, domination, rooted in political economy, became internalized by the subaltern often actively reproduced his/her own subjugation which sometimes manifested itself in *resentment* and violence to the self.

For Fanon, colonial domination and rule were based on violence, not only the bloody violence of conquest and physical repression-torture, but also the bloodless psychological violence of imposed values, understandings, and identities. In short, colonization did violence to the very humanity of the colonized and often led to their psychic death (Bulhan, 1985).<sup>2</sup> Collective identities and, in turn, frames of self-designations were not simply arbitrary social constructions, rather, in the case of dominated peoples, they were imposed to vouchsafe power relations by both dividing and rendering impotent subjects. This took place on the conscious as well as unconscious levels since identities not only mediate between material relations and



consciousness, but also express desires that have themselves been colonized by particular material conditions.

Although a detailed examination of Fanon's complex relationship to psychoanalysis is well beyond the purview of this chapter, we would note that unlike Reich, Fromm, and others who sought to develop a radical social psychology, Fanon's project was not the elaboration of a theory of selfhood but rather an understanding of subjectivity under conditions of colonialism.<sup>3</sup> More specifically he indicated how colonial domination fostered psycho-cultural alienation, denigrated identities, and colonized desires that led agents to reproduce their own subjugation and misery. He also provided trenchant insights into the nature of desire under conditions of colonial violence.

As previously noted, identities and self-designations are not simply social constructions but also must be understood in terms of the desire for recognition. Fanon's conception of recognition is, in large measure, derived from Hegel who was the first to powerfully formulate the demand of the modern self for recognition. For Hegel, man *is* to the extent that he is recognized, to obtain full consciousness of self is possible only through the reciprocal struggle for recognition by the other. Self-consciousness emerged out of a life or death struggle for recognition between the Master and Slave; the Master needed more than ownership of the slave's body, s/he needed the *recognition* of his/her selfhood and domination as the prelude to his/her own self-consciousness.<sup>4</sup> Following Hegel, Fanon (1967, p. 216) suggests that "man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognized by him." In short, identity, or rather the consciousness of Self is intimately linked with recognition.

For Fanon, recognition is a central issue because it is, at a markedly human level, the bedrock of authentic human relations – it was a deciding factor between a "human" existence and a "thingified" or "objectified" existence (Onwuanibe, 1983, pp. 15–16). Indeed, the starting point for Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* is the question of authenticity. Drawing on Sartre's (1948) analysis of anti-Semitism as the construction of inferiority and otherness, Fanon suggests that the Negro, like the Jew was denied recognition of his/her humanity. But unlike the Negro, the Jew's otherness was not visible by virtue of his/her skin color. Hence, Fanon was quick to point out that Sartre forgot that the Negro suffers in and because of his body quite differently from the white man (Fanon, 1967, p. 138). The Jew can remain anonymous but the Negro cannot because he is "overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the 'idea' that others have of me but of my own appearance" (Fanon, 1967, p. 116). The body of the Negro, his very corporeality, under colonialism functions as a signifier which encodes negativity. As Fanon notes:

Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third person consciousness . . . A slow composition of my *self* as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world – such seems to be the schema. It does not impose itself on me; it is, rather, a definitive structuring of the self and of the world – definitive because it creates a real dialectic between my body and the world (Fanon, 1967, pp. 110–111).

The sheer visibility of the racial/colonial other is at once a point of identity – “Look a Negro.” Fanon, echoing Sartre’s analysis of the “look” illustrates how the African is seen, made an object, but not recognized as a member of a “common” species. Thus, the experience of alienation in one’s own body, that “self-doubling process in which one experiences oneself as a body-for-others, is more profound for Fanon’s Negro than for Sartre’s Jew” (Kruks, 1996, p. 128).

The structure of colonial society, the denial of recognition the denigration of Blackness and the incessant construction of Blackness as inferior most often led to self-hatred among Blacks in the colony. Insofar as the denial of recognition and the imposition of denigrated identities sustained psychic alienation and powerlessness vis-à-vis the colonizer, Fanon was attracted to Adlerian psychology which had focussed on feelings of inferiority among proletarian patients. Adler, a committed socialist, was himself influenced by the Nietzschean analyses of power, powerlessness, and resentment which also inform Fanon (Gaines, 1996; Hayes, 1996). As Nietzsche noted, the acceptance of a slave morality of humility had important consequences since the acceptance of subjugation often led to self-loathing and even self-inflicted violence. A long tradition from W. E. Dubois to William Wilson has noted the adverse consequences of structural domination and racial marginalization. From the “death of the soul” to the “tangle of pathology,” many have chronicled the loss of humanity suffered by subjugated populations.

From the shanty towns of Algeria to the inner-city victims of American apartheid, this loss of humanity often manifests itself in forms of self-destructive and violent behavior. We are, of course, reminded here of Engels description of the lives of the working classes of Manchester 150 years ago and the ways in which the victims of exploitation often preyed upon each other rather than those responsible for their oppression. In a similar vein, Fanon pointed how Algerians living in the shantytowns rarely attacked the French but rather turned on one another. The situation is not all that different in the inner cities of America where black-on-black or brown on brown crime is frequent and where the body-bags and coffins provide a stark reminder of “the crisis in Black America” (West, 1993). In short, most of the victims of inner-city violence are themselves among the poor and oppressed, twice victimized by the machinations of white supremacist capitalism (hooks, 1995). As Bulhan (1985) suggests,

conditions of oppression often spawn the internalization of domination – intro-pression – which thwarts the realization of will and the articulations of creative selfhood and community. This, in turn, leads to autopression – the expression of domination and violence to the self, the family and community. Not only do these forms of social pathology make effective resistance unlikely, they often serve ideological functions insofar as these pathologies are used to justify or rationalize racism and the blame the victim mentality which has enjoyed a popular resurgence in recent years.<sup>5</sup>

It is within this context that Fanon's views on violence as cleansing and cathartic must be understood as a reaction to the violence of the colonizer. We contend that for Fanon, anger, hatred, and violence represent expressions of agency for those whose agenic subjectivity is subjugated. For the colonized who are denied recognition, who are exploited and oppressed, violence – one of the oldest means of asserting agency – becomes the last expression of empowerment that the colonizer cannot thwart. But it is imperative to note that Fanon *did not* advocate violence for the sake of violence; he was not “an apostle of unorganized expressive violence but of violence as a social practice” (Hall, 1978, p. 384). While he recognized that the practice of violence was what bound the colonized together as a whole, that violence freed the colonized from his/her inferiority complex and restored his/her self-respect (Fanon, cited in Hall, 1978, p. 384), Fanon was quite clear that the ultimate goal was to organize and mobilize; the task of the revolutionary was to educate the masses, to nurture a revolutionary consciousness. In this regard, Fanon's understanding of the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer and the need for political education is strikingly similar to the views expressed by Freire in his seminal text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. For Freire (1970, p. 31) too understood that freedom was only attainable by conquest. He wrote:

There would be no oppressed had there been no prior situation of violence to establish their subjugation. Violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognize others as persons – not by those who are oppressed, exploited, and unrecognized. It is not the unloved who initiate disaffection, but those who cannot love because they love only themselves. It is not the helpless, subject to terror, who initiate terror, but the violent, who with their power create the concrete situation which begets the “rejects of life.” It is not the tyrannized who initiate despotism, but the tyrants. It is not the despised who initiate hatred, but those who despise. It is not those whose humanity is denied then who negate man, but those who denied that humanity (thus negating their own as well) . . . For the oppressors, however, it is always the oppressed (whom they obviously never call “the oppressed” but – depending on whether they are fellow countrymen or not – “those people” or “the blind and envious masses” or “savages” or “natives” or “subversives”) who are disaffected, who are “violent,” “barbaric,” “wicked,” or “ferocious” when they react to the violence of the oppressors. Yet it is – paradoxical though it may seem – precisely in the

response of the oppressed to the violence of their oppressors that a gesture of love may be found. Consciously or unconsciously, the act of rebellion by the oppressed (an act which is always, or nearly always, as violent as the initial violence of the oppressors) can initiate love. Whereas the violence of the oppressors prevents the oppressed from being fully human, the response of the latter to this violence is grounded in the desire to pursue the right to be human . . . It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors. The latter, as an oppressive class, can free neither others nor themselves. It is therefore essential that the oppressed wage the struggle to resolve the contradiction in which they are caught; and the contradiction will be resolved by the appearance of the new man: neither oppressor nor oppressed, but man in the process of liberation (Freire, 1970, pp. 41-42).<sup>6</sup>

It was precisely the systemic denigration and devaluing of Black subjects in the colony, as outlined above, that led Fanon to explore how the affirmation of Blackness and the politics of Negritude might be beneficial for the colonized, it is to this issue which we now turn.

## NEGRITUDE, DIFFERENCE, AND IDENTITY POLITICS

Fanon's analysis of the black *evolue* under colonial rule coupled with his utter repulsion with the way in which the colonizer had so thoroughly reorganized the identity and social space of the colonized to the extent that self-negation and alienated consciousness were the inevitable outcomes inspired Fanon to explore the ideals of Negritude and the psychic benefits that such a movement might have for colonized and alienated subjects. Fanon was drawn to the politics of Negritude largely because of the influence of Aimee Cesaire, a poet and principal leader of the *evolues*. Cesaire's writings, namely *A Discourse on Colonialism* and *Return To My Homeland*, represented the quintessence of the whole ensemble of values, emotions and historical perspectives known as Negritude. Cesaire's writings and his teachings as well as the views articulated by Senghor and others made a lasting impression on Fanon with the message that Black was beautiful and that Blacks should be proud of their difference.<sup>7</sup>

In many respects the politics of Negritude parallels contemporary discourses of identity politics for both seek to valorize and celebrate identities that have historically been denigrated, marginalized, and debased by the hegemonic/dominant culture. This has undoubtedly been an important development for identity politics has enabled subaltern groups to reconstruct their own histories and give voice to their individual and collective identities. Indeed, the "passion of naming" is at the heart of identity politics for it has been those who have been marginalized and oppressed, those constructed as "other" who have fought so vehemently to name themselves (Bannerji, 1995). The capacity to name oneself in the order of thought, to move as bell hooks (1989, p. 12) puts it, from silence to speech, is an empowering gesture that is obviously linked to

the wider issue of agency – how people either become agents in the process of making history or function as silenced, passive objects buried under the weight of oppression and exploitation.

These gestures, however, have their own limitations for they do not guarantee the conditions and resources, the “material power necessary for social flourishing and living freely” (Goldberg, 1994, p. 13). Identity politics, in this regard, often amounts to little more than a politics of “gesture,” to a political posturing that fails to interrogate forms of social organization and arrangements of power and privilege that go beyond the realm of the immediate experience and the discursive or textual realms of representation. Much of what is called identity politics, in the end, is little more than a demand for inclusion into the club of representation – something which reinscribes a neo-liberal pluralist stance rooted in the ideology of free-market capitalism. In short, the political sphere is “modelled on the marketplace and freedom amounts to the liberty of all political vendors to display their goods” (Bannerji, 1991, p. 84).

This, however, is not intended to trivialize the centrality of the issues raised by identity politics and the politics of representation for the production and circulation of certain images and representations continues to play an integral role in perpetuating domination and forms of cultural hegemony. In fact, the texts, literature, and images that circulate in our society do not merely supply knowledge or entertainment but also create frames of intelligibility, or what Berger (1972) calls “ways of seeing.” Indeed, bell hooks (1992, p. 2) has noted that there exists a “direct and abiding connection” between the maintenance of white hegemony and the institutionalization via mass media and other institutions of “specific images, representations of race, of blackness that support and maintain the oppression, exploitation, and overall domination of all black people.” Hence, we would not deny the salience of concerns over representation; rather our point is that neither should we be straight jacketed by struggles that fail to move beyond the politics of representation, understood here as the critique of omitted and distorted representations. Such struggles, in our view, should not constitute the be-all and end-all of a progressive political agenda. Nor, for that matter, should the mere celebration of difference and diversity.

Our reading of Fanon suggests that were he alive today, he too would have serious reservations about the politics of identity. Fanon initially embraced the politics of Negritude for he believed it to be a powerful and potentially empowering political discourse for colonized Black subjects. Against those that would impose a false and debilitating universalism, there are moments in Fanon’s narrative where he explicitly defended and indeed relished the experience of particularity as something to be guarded against the “constructive violence of universalizing knowledge” (Sekyi-Otu, 1996, p. 16). This was apparent in

Fanon's critique of Sartre who, in an essay entitled "Black Orpheus," had argued that Negritude was a minor term in the dialectical progression (in the Hegelian sense that is). According to Sartre, the affirmation of white supremacy provided the thesis, Negritude as an authentic value was the moment of negativity and the creation of a humanity without races would be the synthesis. For Fanon, however, Negritude was a source of self-respect and he chastised Sartre for undermining black zeal and described Sartre's definition of Negritude as a form of betrayal (Fanon, 1967, p. 135).

Although Fanon was sympathetic to Negritude as a historical force and as a movement that had affected him in his own rediscovery of himself, Fanon nevertheless eventually rejected it: (i) for being essentialist – that is unable to account for the diversity of black cultures (cf. Fanon, 1961, p. 216); and (ii) as a political discourse capable of nurturing the revolutionary consciousness necessary to combat oppressive social conditions. In short, Fanon eventually recognized that merely celebrating difference and affirming Black identity did not go far enough in advancing the concrete struggles against the social organization of colonialism and the oppression and alienation which those forms of organization engendered. Hence, we would argue that both implicitly and in some instances explicitly, Fanon provides the rudiments of a critique of identity politics.

This is particularly evident if we consider the shift which Fanon's work underwent from the writing of *Black Skin, White Masks* to the publication of *Wretched of the Earth*. Paradoxically, in terms of social philosophy, Fanon made approximately the same journey from *Black Skin, White Masks* to *Wretched of the Earth* that Sartre had made from *Being And Nothingness* to *Critique of Dialectical Reason* for in both writers there is a retreat from the existential emphasis on the individual freedom of choice and therefore, on the availability of universal reason accompanied by a growing attention to *social determination*. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, the experience of the individual is the starting point, the term of primary reference, whereas in *Wretched of the Earth* we see more emphasis on political and collective struggles. There is, we would contend, a shift from a more particularist standpoint to a more broad perspective which takes into social relations other than race, specifically class.

Indeed, Fanon (1961) argued that if the various uprisings and insurrections which were taking place were to graduate into full-blown revolution, the racially motivated hatred against the colonizer had to be divested of its racial component. It had to be acknowledged that the struggle was not against persons of a particular color but against oppression and exploitation. That is, exploiters and oppressors may be black, while those assisting the liberation movement may

be white. The real friends and enemies of the revolution are recognized by other criteria which cut across racial and color lines. In the beginning of the anti-colonial struggle, blackness itself was understood as a revolutionary identity; however, it did not remain so according to Fanon's narrative in *Wretched of the Earth* because the nationalist leaders (and the bourgeoisie they represent) failed to understand the conditions of their own people. For Fanon, the transcendence of nationalism and racialism was central for he believed that racialism often served as a smokescreen to promote class interests. Therefore, while nationalism and the affirmation of Negritude was a necessary point of revolutionary articulation, it could not be the be-all and end-all of political struggle for inherent in nationalism was the possibility of class hegemony – a situation in which full and true decolonization had not reached the proletariat (Mostern, 1994, p. 266).

One might further argue that Fanon moved from valorizing an identity of “being” (that is, of Blackness) to one of “becoming” – one which develops in the concrete praxis of struggle and which goes beyond the discourse of nationalism or racialism. Sekyi-Otu notes that

a taking stock of the situation at [the] precise moment of the struggle is decisive, for it allows people to pass from total, indiscriminating nationalism to social and economic consciousness. The people who at the beginning of the struggle had adopted the primitive Manicheism of the settler . . . realize as they go along that it sometimes happens that you get Blacks who are whiter than the Whites and that the fact of having a national flag and the hope of an independent nation does not always tempt certain strata of the population to give up their interests or privileges . . . the people find out that the iniquitous fact of exploitation can wear a black face . . . Reason's triumph, the faculty of dialectical disclosure, is . . . achieved experientially through a corrosive destruction of the rigidity and simplicity to which a racialized apprehension of the world had reduced everything. Thanks to this “bitter discovery” of exploitative relations and distributive injustice as intraracial facts, as human, all-too-human possibilities, the nascent postcolonial subject is ready for a veritable political and epistemic reorientation (Sekyi-Otu, 1996, pp. 114–115).

Sekyi-Otu (1996, p. 116) goes on to point out that for Fanon the ultimate victory to be celebrated is not the death of the colonizer, but rather the “death of race as the principle of moral judgement.”

Recently the call to transcend racialism and forms of Manichean consciousness has been echoed in the work of Manning Marable (1995) who, addressing the American context, argues that while the prism of race is precisely how most Americans view their social, political, and cultural milieus, it is nonetheless a distorting prism which often obfuscates more than it illuminates. He argues for example that the conceptual framework of race “often clouds the concrete reality of class and blurs the actual structure of power and privilege” while at the same time “creating tensions between oppressed groups which share common class

interests" (Marable, 1995, p. 8). In this regard, Marable suggests that race often functions as a form of ideology which not only masks and distorts concrete reality but which also perpetuates a "divide and conquer" mentality which is conducive to the maintenance of the status quo. He writes:

Our greatest challenge in rethinking race as ideology is to recognize how we unconsciously participate in its recreation and legitimatization. Despite the legal desegregation of American civil society a generation ago, the destructive power and perverse logic of race still continues. Most Americans continue to perceive social reality in a manner which grossly underestimates the role of social class, and legitimates the categories of race as central to the ways in which privilege and authority are organized. We must provide the basis for a progressive alternative . . . moving the political culture of black America from a racialized discourse and analysis to a critique of inequality which has the capacity and potential to speak to the majority of American people. This leap in theory and social analysis must be made, if black America has any hope of transcending its current impasse of powerlessness and systemic inequality. As C. L. R. James astutely observed: "The race question is subsidiary to the class question in politics, and to think of imperialism in terms of race is disastrous. But to neglect the racial factor as merely incidental is an error only less grave than to make it fundamental" (Marable, 1995, p. 229).

Marable's assertions about the primacy of class raise an issue which has been hotly contested in Leftist circles for quite some time – the identity politics vs. class politics dilemma. In far too many nascent debates, especially between Marxists and identity politicians, there has been a tendency to cast identity and class as two mutually exclusive forms of politics. Many orthodox Marxists persist in valorizing economistic and reductionist strands of Marxism, which do not accord adequate attention to forms of oppression other than those constituted by class. For these stalwarts, other concerns are seen as epiphenomenon, marginal to the "real" class struggle. On the other hand, multiculturalists and identity politicians have not adequately addressed class and capitalist social organization. Indeed, enamored with the cultural and in a rush to avoid the "theoretically incorrect" sins of "totalization" and "economism," many have elided even a minimalist concern with political economy, class formation, and infrastructural issues. As a result, many multiculturalists, postmodernists, and advocates of identity politics have replaced the economic reductionism of orthodox Marxism with another form of reductionism – that of "culturalism" – a tendency which has virtually divorced political economy from considerations of identity formation. As a number of astute critics have aptly noted, the current romance with the cultural and the concomitant ignorance of political economy has helped to advance the importance of cultural identification, especially for marginalized constituencies, but at the same time has obfuscated the political and economic roots of their marginalization; undermined an exploration of the ways in which difference is actively produced in relation to the history and



social organization of capitalist – inclusive of imperialist and colonialist legacies; and failed to apprehend the structural and institutional parameters that produce difference (Bannerji, 1995; Caws, 1994; Ebert, 1996; Turner, 1994).

Following Bannerji (1995) we would suggest that the “identity or class” stance creates a debilitating and unnecessary dichotomy. By drawing upon the Marxian concept of mediation to unsettle our categorical approaches to both class and identity, Bannerji argues that:

It is curious how many times in history we have come to face an utterly false dichotomy, a superficial view of the situation in our politics. As Marx pointed out – it is absurd to choose between consciousness and the world, subjectivity and social organization, personal or collective will and historical or structural determination. It is equally absurd then, to see identity and difference as historical forms of consciousness unconnected to class formation, development of capital and class politics. The mutually formative nature of identity, difference, and class becomes apparent if we begin by taking a practical approach to the issue, or their relation of “intersection.” If “difference” implies more than classificatory diversity, and encodes social and moral-cultural relations and forms of ruling, and establishes identities by measuring the distance between ruler and ruled, all the while constructing knowledge through power – then let us try to imagine “class” or class politics without these forms and contents (Bannerji, 1995, p. 30).

The point of Bannerji’s formulation is to historicize identity and difference in relation to the history and social organization of capital and class – which includes imperialist and colonialist legacies. By drawing upon a materialist and historical formulation, Bannerji is able to (re)conceptualize “difference” and “identity” in relation to social and economic organization rather than seeing difference as free-floating and/or identities as fixed and static. Following Marx’s discussion of the concrete and the specific as the convergence of many determinations in the *Grundrisse*, this formulation highlights the importance of conceptualizing class with these social mediations and converging determinations in mind. To do otherwise would amount to treating class solely as an abstraction devoid of the constricting specificities of race and gender or falling prey to the tendency of treating class merely as a cultural phenomenon (as yet another proliferating manifestation of identity), as an essentialized form of identity politics separate and distinct from gender and race. In the former case, class as an abstraction is “gutted of its practical, everyday relations and the content of consciousness” while in the latter class it would be reduced to a “cultural essence that exists independently though in additive relation to other cultural essentialities” (Bannerji, 1995, pp. 30–31).

In a somewhat different but not unrelated vein, Ebert (1996, p. 134) points to the necessity of historically grounding our understanding of difference. She contends that difference needs to be understood as the product of social contradictions. We need to acknowledge that otherness is not something that

passively happens, but rather is actively produced. In other words, since systems of difference almost always involve relations of domination, oppression, and exploitation, we must concern ourselves with the economies of relations of difference that exist in an historically specific social formation. Apprehending the meaning and function of difference in this manner necessarily highlights the importance of understanding the structural and institutional parameters that produce difference as well as the complexities and contradiction of capitalism. While not all social relations are subordinate to capital or overdetermined by economic relations, most social relations constitutive of gendered and racialized identities are considerably shaped by the social relations of production. Capitalism is an overarching totality that is, unfortunately, becoming increasingly invisible in many analyses undertaken by poststructuralists and postmodernists (McLaren, 1997, p. 244).

In light of the postmodern hostility towards the concept of totality, a few qualifying remarks are in order. A number of post-al theorists tend to reject the notion of totality as a remnant of Gulag epistemology. There is a proclivity towards equating totality with totalitarianism – something which is both naive and theoretically simplistic (Jameson, 1990, pp. 26–27), as well as politically suspect. On this point, Terry Eagleton is especially insightful and worth quoting at length:

For radicals to discard the idea of totality in a rush of holophobia is . . . to furnish themselves with some much-needed consolation. For in a period when . . . so-called micropolitics seems the order of the day, it is relieving to convert this necessity into virtue – to persuade oneself . . . that social totality is in any case a chimera . . . The theoretical discrediting of the idea of totality, then, is to be expected in an epoch of political defeat for the left. Much of the scepticism of it, after all, hails from intellectuals who have no particularly pressing reason to locate their own existence within a broader political framework. There are others, however, who are not quite so fortunate . . . Not looking for totality is just a code for not looking at capitalism (Eagleton, 1996, pp. 9–12).

Furthermore, while the erasure of totality is done in the name of subverting metaphysical narratives, we would do well to acknowledge that not all forms of totality are theoretically and politically deficient. Indeed, polemics against the concept of totality rarely distinguish between varying senses and types of totality and the different ways the concept has been taken up by diverse critical theorists (Kellner, 1990). It is therefore important to point out that we are not deploying the term here to refer to some subsuming, metaphysical category in the sense of an organic, unified, oppressive unity. Nor is totality being defined simply as a structure or system comprised of parts that are constituted by the whole system to which they belong and which are interrelated for that formulation is far too functionalist and tends to erase the sensuous activities of historically situated agents. Rather, the notion of totality is invoked here to refer to the complex, multidimensional

mensional, and multilevelled relations of social organization. The importance of the concept is based on the insight that phenomena must ultimately be understood contextually and relationally within the matrices of a larger social formation. What must be abandoned, in our view, is not the concept of totality itself, but the reductive use of totality – those formulations that operate with a reified or fetishized concept of totality. Rejecting all notions of totality summarily runs the risk of trapping oneself in particularistic theories which obscure real connections and relationships, and which cannot explain how the diverse relations that constitute large social and political systems interrelate and mutually determine and constrain one another (Giroux, 1992; Lipsitz, 1990).

Fanon remains relevant today for he developed the concept of totality in precisely this manner, as part of an attempt to dialectically understand the concrete, socio-historical context that was his object of study. As Mostern (1994) has aptly pointed out, Fanon's works represent practical and concrete totalizations of the anti-colonial struggle and the historical situation of Africa as he knew it. Moreover, Fanon fully understood both the cultural/ideological and political economic bases of the construction of otherness and subalterity and the hegemonic purposes which such constructions served. Fanon's deployment of both psychoanalytic theory and phenomenological, Sartrean-influenced Marxism represented an attempt to illustrate the ways in which oppression is not only externally imposed but also internally perpetuated by the oppressed and colonized themselves.

However, it is also important to note that Fanon was also cognizant of the fact that these denigrated identities could also serve as the grounds for resistance – that is the lived experience of being constructed as the despised and reviled other could be the foundation for nurturing an oppositional consciousness. In Fanon's narrative the category of lived experience is, however, not essentialized as it is in many contemporary identity-driven narratives; rather experience serves as a referential standpoint from which oppressed peoples may deconstruct the mystifications of the dominant social order and the construction of subalterity. Experience, in Fanon's account, is taken up as a *mediating* influence between social structure and social consciousness.

Just as the concept of totality has been given short shrift in many postmodern narratives, so too has the concept of mediation. We would contend, however, that the concept of mediation deepens and ameliorates the concept of totality and helps to illuminate the interconnectedness of specific social and political forces, the larger spheres of social organization, and their relationship to identity and experience. The purpose of the concept is to capture the "dynamic" – showing how social relations and forms come into being in and through each other. It thereby enables the creation of a knowledge "which provides an approx-

imation between internal (mental/conceptual) and external reality” (Bannerji, 1991, p. 93). The concept of mediation also enables us to problematize the autonomous, volitional subject of liberal humanism, for its points to the way in which the social, historical, and structural are always imbricated in the constitution of subjectivity and experience. At the same time, however, it refuses those formulations that present the objectified and oversocialized conceptualization of human existence, while denying the importance of consciousness and agency. In this regard, the relevance of the concept of mediation is that it allows us to avoid both debilitating forms of subjectivism, which ignore the historical limits and conditions of social organization, as well as forms of objectivism which delegitimize human activity and praxis (Scatamburlo, 1997).

Fanon’s lived experience (and its contradictions) as a Black man living under colonial rule provided a starting point for his politics and a basis for his agenic selfhood, but that experience, while provisionally invoked, was then contextualized within the broader sociopolitical and economic framework that shaped and gave form to his experience. Otherwise stated, he acknowledged that his experience was shaped by a convergence of social determinations. While Fanon’s experience as a Black man and his embrace of Negritude was indeed central to his political awakening, he recognized that Negritude, while psychologically empowering, was not an adequate basis for revolutionary consciousness. In short, Fanon was acutely attuned to the fact that the mere affirmation of one’s identity and difference, in and of itself, was not enough to change the wretched conditions of the society in which he lived. Rather, for Fanon the ultimate aim of revolutionary action was to transform the “wretched of the earth” from “beings for others” who were objectified and denigrated to “beings for themselves,” a transformation that would entail changing not only the material conditions of colonial existence and relationships of ownership and control of labor but also the master-slave relationship which was the psychological embodiment of those concrete, material conditions.

## **ENLIGHTENMENT AND HUMANISM RECONSIDERED**

The Enlightenment has been one of the most debated themes in contemporary social theory. In recent decades, a proliferation of theoretical and political discourses have sought to contest, deconstruct and decenter the epistemological and ontological presuppositions bequeathed to us by the Enlightenment project. Despite some obvious differences, these trajectories have converged to some extent to reject totalizing, universalizing “master” narratives and the discourse of humanism. Moreover, the hopes once vested in the progressive use of reason for moral and social progress are today viewed by many, at best, as naive and

futile fantasies, at worst, as engines of domination. Indeed, Enlightenment thinking has been blamed for many things from Auschwitz to European imperialism. A variety of critics have revealed the colonizing, imperialist, racist, sexist and Eurocentric tendencies of Enlightenment thought. From feminists to postmodernists, communitarians to multiculturalists, the Enlightenment “tradition” – its values, ideals, and promises – has been under siege.

Of course, the critique of Enlightenment is not novel. Shortly after Enlightenment ideas had been established as a sort of new intellectual orthodoxy among the “cultivated” elites of Europe, they became the target of intense condemnation and critical reaction. From the German counter-Enlightenment to the Romanticists, from Edmund Burke and Joseph deMaistre to Nietzsche, Marx, and the Frankfurt School, the Enlightenment has long had its share of critics.

Fanon too provided the rudiments of a critique of European Enlightenment, the sharpest of which appear in the conclusion of *Wretched of the Earth*. But Fanon’s criticisms of the Enlightenment were not merely epistemological, they were explicitly political and spoke to the hypocrisy of Enlightenment humanism and the violent terror it wrought. He writes:

Come, then, comrades . . . We must shake off the heavy darkness in which we were plunged, and leave it behind. The new day which is already at hand must first find us firm, prudent, and resolute . . . Let us waste no time in sterile litanies and nauseating mimicry. Leave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their own streets, in all the corners of the globe . . . Europe undertook the leadership of the world with ardour, cynicism, and violence . . . Everyone one of her movements has burst the bounds of space and time. Europe has declined all humanity and all modesty . . . That same Europe where they were never done talking of Man, and where they never stopped proclaiming that they were only anxious for the welfare of Man: today we know with what sufferings humanity has paid for every one of their triumphs of the minds . . . When I search for Man in the technique and the style of Europe, I see only a succession of negations of man, and an avalanche of murders (Fanon, 1961, pp. 311–312).

From this and other passages in Fanon, it is clear that he well understood the murderous history of the West and the hypocrisy of the Enlightenment’s discourse of universal Man which proclaimed the values of human dignity, freedom, justice, and equality yet denied them to the colonized. He was painfully aware that the Enlightenment had been deeply complicit with the violent negativity of colonialism and had played a role in it ideology. The formation of the ideas of human nature and a project of ethical civilization for a common humanity crystallized at practically the same historical moment which witnessed particularly violent centuries in the history of the world now known as the era of Western colonialism. Yet, despite his scathing attack on the Enlightenment, Fanon did not seek to abandon its central principles. Nor for that matter did

he seek to abandon the discourse of humanism for Fanon recognized that the fundamental contradiction lay not in “humanism itself but in the disjuncture between the ideology of humanism and the practice of colonialism” (Malik, 1997, p. 124). Hence, Fanon sought to lay the foundations for an alternative, revolutionary humanism.

To speak of humanism in the era of the postmodern condition and various post-al discourses which denounce any discourse that even hints at essentialism may, perhaps, appear anachronistic. Indeed, antihumanism has been one of the defining features of postmodern and poststructuralist discourse for at least two decades. The many and varied critiques of humanism need not be rehearsed here; yet, it is worth briefly noting that much of the post-al hostility directed towards humanism has been both intellectually disingenuous and politically suspect. Most of these narratives treat humanism as though it existed as a monolithic discourse. Their error consists in identifying humanism as such with bourgeois or petty-bourgeois movements, when there are, in fact, a number of historical variants of humanism, bourgeois liberal humanism being but one manifestation. The homogenization of all humanisms into one neglects the attempts by people like Fanon to found a “new humanism” which would substitute for the “Enlightenment’s conception of man’s unchanging nature,” a new historical and revolutionary humanism that would see humans as products of themselves and their own activity in history (Lukacs, 1962, pp. 28–29; Young, 1992, p. 245).

An important distinction can and should be made between Enlightenment liberal humanism, which has played a colonizing role in history, and the revolutionary humanism espoused by Fanon. This revolutionary humanism is, as yet, unrealized in its most profound sense. This variant of humanism gives expression to the pain, sorrow, and degradation of the oppressed, the colonized, the wretched of the earth. Whereas bourgeois liberal humanism “separated theory from practice” and served to conceal the “true nature of the system of exploitation it helped to sustain,” (Bernasconi, 1996, p. 115) Fanon’s revolutionary humanism is predicated on a firm commitment to human emancipation and the extension of human dignity, freedom, and social justice to all people – a commitment to *really* universalize these values and promises in practical terms, rather than merely giving lip service to them in an abstractly delineated discourse of rights. It calls for the transformation of those oppressive institutions and alienating relations that have prevented the bulk of humankind from fulfilling its potential – a transformation that would liberate both the oppressed and the oppressor. It vests its hopes for change in the development of critical consciousness and social agents who make history, although not always in conditions of their choosing. As such, it believes in the power and the culti-

vation of consciousness, but it does not err in making an idol of “reason” detached from social context, as do the idealistic humanists who valorize the omnipotence of reason regardless of time, place, and social circumstances. Finally, Fanon’s revolutionary humanism is undeniably marked by a universalist, ethical thrust – one which envisages a struggle in which Whites, Blacks, and all peoples would receive mutual recognition and unite in fighting the common enemy of mankind – imperialism, capitalism, and all manifestations of exploitation and oppression which deny humans their humanity.

## CONCLUSION

In terms of effecting change, what counts now as always is collective action . . . The future will of course have to be struggled for. It cannot be willed into place. But nonetheless we still have to dream and to know in what direction to desire (Hebdige, 1988, pp. 34–35).

The impossible must be imagined if it is to be realized, and it is true sanity to do so (Kovel, 1991, p. 13).

We will not mince our words. We live at a perilous historical moment. As we have noted relations of degradation, dispossession, and disillusionment are pervasive. Alienation, moral decay, and violence are ubiquitous features of our time. Any remaining semblances of democracy are being rolled back by the forces of the New Right. Concomitantly, perhaps one of the most serious consequences of the rise of identity-based politics has been the extent to which the valorization of differences has led to the fragmentation of an already weakened and marginalized Left (Epstein, 1996). It is within this context that we have argued that Fanon’s work provides a glimmer of hope for it is uncompromising in its call for revolutionary praxis and the elimination of human suffering. His insights provide a reminder that people still bear the heavy burdens of oppression and alienation and that radical praxis can only emerge in the active process of continuous struggle. But perhaps most significant of all, Fanon reminds us that the most important struggle is not one which pits black against white, or brown against black, etc., but rather one which unites progressive forces in a common cause against the forces of oppression and the system of exploitation.

In *The Philosophy of the Future*, Ernst Bloch (1970, p. 86) writes of dreams: daydreams and night dreams which, as he points out, differ in at least one fundamental regard. Whereas night dreams generally entail a journey back into the dark recesses of repressed experiences, the daydream represents an “unrestricted journey forward,” an envisaging of “circumstances and images of a desired, better life.” At this critical juncture, it is incumbent upon progressives to take up the task of articulating a common dream, a common set of visions, with the clarity and lucidity that only *collective* daydreaming can engender.

Indeed, in order for a viable Left to reemerge and in order for such a movement to have any impact in the struggle for progressive change, it will have to cultivate a common project. As Ahmad (1992, 1997), Hobsbawm (1996) and others have aptly pointed out, without some common ground, there can be no Left at all. And yet, there is a profound resistance to the very notion of the "common," a fear that any emphasis on commonality or community will necessarily entail a suppression of diversity and difference. We would argue, however, that such suspicions are, more often than not, misguided and politically debilitating. As Kruks notes:

Both reified notions of difference and postmodern claims that the search for common ground is implicitly "totalitarian" too frequently lead to a politics that eschews engagement (either analytical or practical) with the wider world of structures, institutions, and macro-historical processes (Kruks, 1996, p. 132).

Of course, we *would* do well to remind ourselves that difference and diversity are values that were not always well-received on the Left. The proliferation of identity politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s stemmed, in large part, from the inadequacies of the New Left and its failure to deal with the real implication of political diversity.<sup>8</sup> One would hope that the benefit of hindsight and historical memory have taught us some valuable lessons. On the other hand, we need to recognize that organizing on the basis of discrete and unconnected identities hasn't furthered the cause of broad-based progressive change and the eradication of oppressive social relations. If anything, identity politics may have sent us in quite the opposite direction.<sup>9</sup> It is therefore imperative to acknowledge that calls for common cause among Leftists need not mean a call for cultural homogeneity (Ahmad, 1997; Lorde, 1984).

Cultivating common dreams does, however, necessitate moving beyond the particularism of identity politics. It demands building forms of solidarity that do not suppress the real heterogeneity of interests but are committed to constructing a common ground where visions of social transformation (rather than liberal pluralism) may be collectively dreamed of and fought for. It requires embarking on a quest to forge a "new" identity, premised on the notion of "becoming" rather than "being." Identities of becoming are politically motivated and historically situated. They are not grounded in essentialist, individualist prerogatives; rather they are spawned, as Fanon well realized, by a thorough and critical understanding of the social totality and the forces that mediate reality and social consciousness. Nurtured in collective struggle, they ask not "Who are you?" according to some reified identity scale, but rather "Where are you?" in terms of political commitment. The significant distinction between these questions lies in the fact that the latter demands an ethical



response. Indeed, it is very difficult to imagine a Left politics without an ethical, normative stance and without a vision of the future, no matter how provisional.

We agree with Sekyi-Otu's (1996) assertion that Fanon's work provides a normative, revolutionary humanist vision that has gained even greater significance given the current fascination with postmodern positions that would eschew any reference to normative frames of reference, universalism, and humanism. We would do well to remind ourselves that any type of engaged social criticism or political practice is conceivable only in terms of some normative criteria "according to which one discerns whether or not a relation is characterized by domination, exploitation, subjugation, etc." (Best, 1997, p. 25).

The ability to imagine a better future and a freer, less alienating society demands, as Hebdige (quoted above) intimates, that we have a map in order to know in what direction we must desire. We would contend that such a map must be grounded upon a socialist, revolutionary humanist, vision. Of course, the very idea of socialism has been junked by many factions on the Left or proclaimed dead by others. Such reactions are due, in some measure, to the baggage of historical failure and the memories of authoritarian and repressive regimes created in the name of socialism. Yet we agree with Kanpol and McLaren (1995), that although the fragmentation engendered by identity politics, the segmentation created by the proliferation of market-driven lifestyle enclaves, and the concomitant migration of subjectivity to private hedonism, as well as the general neo-liberal direction of transnational capitalism pose significant challenges to conventional ways of imagining socialist democracy, it need not sound the death knell for socialist struggle.

Creating what West (1993, p. 241) refers to as a "substantive socialist identity," however, requires the articulation of common interests founded upon universalist principles for appeals to pure particularism do not and have not offered solutions to the problems we currently face. Eagleton notes that one is a socialist precisely because universality "*doesn't* exist at present in any positive, as opposed to merely descriptive or ideological, sense." He goes on to state:

Not everyone, as yet, enjoys freedom, happiness and justice. Part of what prevents this from coming about is precisely the false universalism which holds that it can be achieved by extending the values and liberties of a particular sector of humankind, roughly speaking Western man, to the entire globe . . . Socialism is a critique of this false universalism, not in the name of cultural particularism . . . but in the name of the right of everyone to negotiate their own difference in terms of everyone else's (Eagleton, 1996, p. 118).

Echoing these sentiments, Palmer (1997, p. 66) argues that the purpose of Marxism itself was to materialize and radicalize enlightenment principles, extending their potential to all of humanity not just to a privileged sector of society.

At a time when post-al discourses treat the Enlightenment as a monolithic discourse (thereby denying the distinctions and developments within Enlightenment thought) and dismiss universalism and humanism out of hand, Fanon's revolutionary political narrative attains even greater import for we are living in a historical moment that "more than any other demands a universalistic project" (Wood, 1997, p. 13). Fanon's scathing critique of Enlightenment discourse, its false universalism and the hypocrisy of liberal humanism notwithstanding, Fanon (in contradistinction to contemporary postmodern disciples) was not prepared to write the obituaries of humanism and universalism for he realized that a revolutionary vision had to be based on the notion that humanity itself was an unfinished project. Fanon's significance today lies in the fact that he reminds us that "without remembering the possibility of that human face," (Sekyi-Otu, 1996, p. 240) the distinction between *what is* and *what could be* will be forever lost in the bubbling vat of postmodern indeterminability and a sea of ever-proliferating identities.

## NOTES

1. This is particularly evident if we consider the so-called war on drugs which amounts, in the end, to little more than a thinly veiled attack on racial and ethnic minorities and the poor. Although three out of every four drug users are white, it is non-whites who make up the bulk of those arrested and convicted for drug-related offenses (Sklar, 1995).

2. As Bulhan and others have noted, people everywhere attempt to transcend death through creation and procreation. Human labor and social bonding hold a crucial place in this attempt to overcome the finality of physical death. Not only do both satisfy immediate and basic human needs, but they also offer opportunities to objectify one's personality, identity, values and social commitments. A people whose labor is appropriated and whose social bonding is ruptured are, therefore, doomed to social and psychological death (Bulhan, 1985, p. 185).

3. Although classic psychoanalysis was a starting point for Fanon that shaped his insights, his premature death meant that he would never be exposed to more recent psychoanalytic concerns with recognition, empowerment, violence and emotion. Yet as a highly perceptive observer with profound clinical skills, Fanon furnishes us with elements of a critical social psychology that provide the basis for an agenic subject that avoids reductionism.

4. Hegel's epistemological framework has been complimented by recent developments in psychoanalytic theory which suggest that the recognition of emergent selfhood is more salient for the development of a healthy personality than libidinal or aggressive drives. It is argued that a lack of recognition often leads to forms of psychic alienation and even pathological behaviour. Thus as Jessica Benjamin (1986) has argued, individuals often willingly accept subjugation, even the sadism of the other if their powerlessness provided even a minimal source of recognition.

5. This blame the victim mentality underscores the position put forth by Dinesh D'Souza in his recent book, *The End of Racism*. For example, D'Souza argues that the

“real” obstacles facing the African-American community stem from its collective unwillingness to acknowledge its own cultural “deficiencies” – deficiencies which, among others, include an excessive reliance on government funding; the normalization of illegitimacy; paranoia about racism (which D’Souza argues does not exist anymore); and a resistance to academic achievement. After several hundred pages of rebarbative nonsense, D’Souza offers his *piece de resistance*. The solution, he suggests, to correct the malaise which afflicts Black Americans is for them simply to “act white.” It is necessary, however, to understand D’Souza’s arguments in their proper context – D’Souza works out of the American Enterprise Institute, a corporate-funded, right-wing think tank that supports pseudo-scholars of D’Souza’s ilk to promote their regressive right-wing views on social policy. For a more detailed description of D’Souza’s history, the AEI and its funding, and the arguments made in *The End of Racism*, see Scatamburlo (1997).

6. From this passage it is clear that Freire and Fanon shared a similar revolutionary, humanistic project based on enlightenment values such as universalism – that is to say that both, in their different contexts, recognized the importance of critiquing the false universalism of bourgeois humanism.

7. Fanon was a great admirer of Cesaire until the time that Cesaire and others led Martinique to vote for total integration with France. France had given the colonies three alternatives: total integration, total independence or independence within the French community.

8. For an in-depth and insightful look at this issue, see Aronowitz (1996).

9. Tomasky points out that in the years that identity has triumphed on the Left, little has actually been done to improve the material conditions of people’s lives. In fact,

the lives of poor black people . . . have simply gotten worse . . . and now, for the first time in our modern history, laws are being written that penalize poor women for having babies. It’s no accident, in other words, that the right has taken over the country just as the left has permitted itself to disintegrate into ever more discrete race and gender-based camps (Tomasky, 1996, p. 81).

## REFERENCES

- Ahmad, A. (1992). *In Theory*. London: Verso Press.
- Ahmad, A. (1997). Issues of Class and Culture. In: E. M. Wood & J. B. Foster (Eds), *In Defense of History: Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda* (pp. 98–111). New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Aronowitz, S., & DaFazio, W. (1994). *The Jobless Future*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Aronowitz, S. (1996). *The Death and Rebirth of American Radicalism*. New York: Routledge.
- Bannerji, H. (1991). But Who Speaks for Us? Experience and Agency in Conventional Feminist Paradigms, In: H. Bannerji et al. (Eds), *Unsettling Relations* (pp. 67–108). London: Women’s Press.
- Bannerji, H. (1995). *Thinking Through: Essays on Feminism, Marxism and Anti-Racism*. London: Women’s Press.
- Benjamin, J. (1986). *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination*. New York: Pantheon Books.

- Benjamin, W. (1969). *Illuminations*. Boston: New York: Schocken Books.
- Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin Books.
- Bemasconi, R. (1996). Casting The Slough: Fanon's New Humanism for a New Humanity. In: L. Gordon et al. (Eds), *Fanon: A Critical Reader* (pp. 113–121). Boston: Blackwell Publishers.
- Best, B. (1997). Over-the-counter-culture: Rethorizing Resistance in Popular Culture. In: S. Redhead et al. (Eds), *The Clubcultures Reader* (pp. 18–35). Boston: Blackwell Publishers.
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Bulhan, H. A. (1985). *The Psychology of Oppression*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Caws, P. (1994). Identity: Cultural, Transcultural, and Multicultural In: D. T. Goldberg (Ed.), *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* (pp. 371–387). Boston: Blackwell Publishers.
- Chomsky, N. (1995). Rollback II. *ZMagazine*, (February), 20–31.
- Christian, B. (1987). The Race for Theory. *Cultural Critique*, (Spring)(6), 51–63.
- D'Souza, D. (1995). *The End of Racism: Principles for a Multicultural Society*. New York: The Free Press.
- Eagleton, T. (1996). *The illusions of Postmodernism*. London: Blackwell Publishers.
- Ebert, T. (1996). *Ludic Feminism and After*. Minnesota: University of Michigan Press.
- Eco, U. (1995). Eternal Fascism. *UTNE Reader*, (Nov./Dec.), 57–59.
- Epstein, B. (1996). Why Poststructuralism Is a Dead End for Progressive Thought. *Socialist Review*.
- Fanon, F. (1961). *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fanon, F. (1967). *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Gaines, S. O. (1996). Perspectives of DuBois and Fanon on the Psychology of Oppression. In: L. Gordon et al. (Eds), *Fanon: A Critical Reader* (pp. 24–34). Boston: Blackwell Publishers.
- Gates, H. L. (1992). The Master's Pieces: On Canon Formation and the African-American Tradition. In: D. J. Gless & B. H. Smith (Eds), *The Politics of Liberal Education* (pp. 95–117). Chapel Hill: Duke University Press.
- Giroux, H. (1992). *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education*. New York: Routledge.
- Goldberg, D. T. (1994). Introduction: Multicultural Conditions In: *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* (pp. 1–41). Boston: Blackwell Publishers.
- Goldberg, D. T. (1996). In/Visibility and Super/Vision: Fanon on Race, Veils and Discourses of Resistance In: L. Gordon et al. (Eds), *Fanon: A Critical Reader* (pp. 179–200). Boston: Blackwell Publishers.
- Gramsci, A. (1977). Selections from the Prison Notebooks. Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith (Eds & Trans.). New York: International Publishers.
- Hall, S. et al. (1978). *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*. New York: Macmillan.
- Hayes, F. W. (1996). Fanon, Oppression, and Resentment: The Black Experience in the United States. In: L. Gordon et al. (Eds), *Fanon: A Critical Reader* (pp. 11–23). Boston: Blackwell Publishers.
- Hebdige, D. (1988). Some Sons and Their Fathers. *Borderlines*, (Spring)(11), 29–35.
- Hobsbawm E. (1996). The Cult of Identity Politics. *New Left Review*, (May/June)(217), 38–47.
- Hooks, B. (1989). *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Boston: SouthEndPress.
- Hooks, B. (1992). *Black Looks*. San Francisco: Between the Lines.
- hooks, b. (1995). *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*. Henry Holt & Co.
- Jameson, F. (1990). *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic*. Verso.
- Kanpol, B., & McLaren, P. (Eds) (1995). *Critical Multiculturalism: Uncommon Voices in a Common Struggle*. Bergin & Garvey.

- Kellner, D. (1990). Critical Theory and the Crisis of Social Theory. *Sociological Perspective*, 30(1), 11–33.
- Kincheloe, J. (1994). Afterword. In: P. McLaren & C. Lankshear (Eds), *Politics of Liberation: Paths From Freire* (pp. 216–218). Routledge.
- Kovel, J. (1991). *History and Spirit: An Inquiry into the Philosophy of Liberation*. Beacon Press.
- Kruks, S. (1996). Fanon, Sartre, and Identity Politics In: L. Gordon et al. (Eds), *Fanon: A Critical Reader* (pp.122-133). London: Blackwell Publishing.
- Langman, L., & Scatamburlo, V. (1996). The Self Strikes Back: Identity Politics in a Postmodern Age. In: F. Geyer (Ed.), *Alienation, Ethnicity, and Postmodernism* (pp. 127–138). Greenwood Publishing.
- Lipsitz, G. (1990). *Time Passages*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Lipsitz, G. (1994). We Know What Time It Is: Race, Class and Youth Culture in the Nineties. In: A. Ross & T. Rose (Eds), *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture* (pp. 17–28). Routledge.
- Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister Outsider*. The Crossing Press.
- Lukacs, G. (1962) *The Historical Novel*. H. & S. Mitchell (Trans.). Merlin.
- Malik, K. (1997). The Mirror of Race: Postmodernism and the Celebration of Difference. In: E. M. Wood & J. B. Foster (Eds), *In Defense of History: Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda* (pp. 112–133). Monthly Review Press.
- Marable, M. (1995). *Beyond Black & White*. Verso Press.
- McLaren, P. (1994). White Terror and Oppositional Agency: Towards a Critical Multiculturalism. In: D. Theo (Ed.), *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* (pp. 45–74). Blackwell.
- McLaren, P. (1997a). Unthinking Whiteness, Rethinking Democracy: or Farewell to the Blonde Beast; Towards a Revolutionary Multiculturalism. *Educational Foundations*, (Spring), 1–32.
- McLaren, P. (1997b). *Revolutionary Multiculturalism: Pedagogies of Dissent for the New Millennium*. Westview Press.
- Mostern, K. (1994). Decolonization as Learning: Practice and Pedagogy in Frantz Fanon's Revolutionary Narrative. In: H. Giroux & P. McLaren (Eds), *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies* (pp. 253–271). Routledge.
- Norris, C. (1990). *What's Wrong with Postmodernism: Critical Theory and the Ends of Philosophy*. The John Hopkins Press.
- Onwuanibe, R. (1983). *A Critique of Revolutionary Humanism: Frantz Fanon*. Warren H. Green, Inc.
- Palmer, B. D. (1997). Old Positions/New Necessities: History, Class, and Marxist Metanarrative. In: E. M. Wood & J. B. Foster (Eds), *In Defense of History: Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda* (pp. 65–73). Monthly Review Press.
- Parenti, M. (1996). *Dirty Truths: Reflections on Politics, Media, Ideology, Conspiracy, Ethnic Life and Class Power*. City Lights Books.
- Sartre, J.-P. (1948). *Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate*. Schocken Books.
- Scatamburlo, V. (1997). *Soldiers of Misfortune: The New Right's Culture War and the Politics of Political Correctness*. Peter Lang Publications.
- Sekyi-Otu, A. (1996). *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*. Harvard University Press.
- Sklar, H. (1995). The Dying American Dream. In: C. Berlet (Ed.), *Eyes Right!: Challenging the Right Wing Backlash* (pp. 113–134). South End Press.
- Stabile, C. (1995). Another Brick in the Wall: (Re)contextualizing the Crisis. In: M. Berube & C. Nelson (Eds), *Higher Education under Fire: Politics, Economics, and the Crisis of the Humanities* (pp. 108–125). Routledge.
- Stephanson, A. (1988). Interview with Cornel West. In: A. Ross (Ed.), *Universal Abandon?: The Politics of Postmodernism* (pp. 269–286). University of Minnesota Press.

- Tomasky, M. (1996). *Left for Dead: The Life, Death and Possible Resurrection of Progressive Politics in America*. The Free Press.
- Turner, T. (1994). Anthropology and Multiculturalism: What is Anthropology that Multiculturalists Should Be Mindful of It?. In: D. T. Goldberg (Ed.), *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* (pp. 406–425). Blackwell.
- West, C. (1993). *Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times*, Vols. 1&2. Common Courage Press.
- Wood, E. M. (1997). What Is the 'Postmodern' Agenda?. In: E. M. Wood & J. B. Foster (Eds), *In Defense of History: Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda* (pp. 1–16). Monthly Review Press.
- Young, R. (1992). Colonialism and Humanism. In: J. Donald & A. Rattansi (Eds), *'Race', Culture and Difference* (pp. 243–251). Sage Publications.

# SOCIOLOGY IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION: TOWARD A DYNAMIC SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Harry F. Dahms

## INTRODUCTION

Capitalist market economies are the most dynamic economic systems in history.<sup>1</sup> Formal requirements and necessities (competitive pressure, productive and distributive efficiency, technological innovation, organizational control, financial investment) determine to a large degree the trajectory of capitalist development. In the social sciences as well as in political debates, developments in the economic sphere tend to be regarded as “quasi-objective” processes (see Postone, 1993, p. 5) that can be observed scientifically, and evaluated in relation to prevailing norms and values in society. There can be profound variations between countries, in the organizational, social and political contexts of economic decision-making and action, in the link between economic imperatives and prevailing norms and values, and in the degree to which economic developments are viewed as quasi-objective. In addition, adequate economic analysis may be contingent on acknowledging that the developmental trajectory of capitalist economies cannot be fully explained in terms of economic imperatives, that the mechanisms basic to modern capitalism themselves may change over time, and that economics as a discipline neither was designed to consider non-economic origins of economic development, nor to identify changing mechanisms if those changes are of a fundamental nature. Economics

---

**Bringing Capitalism Back for Critique by Social Theory, Volume 21, pages 287–320.**

**Copyright © 2002 by Elsevier Science Ltd.**

**All rights of reproduction in any form reserved.**

**ISBN: 0-7623-0762-5**

may not be able to tackle contingencies resulting from the fact that *after the capitalist game has been played according to one set of rules for a certain period of time, the rules may change, with diverse, potentially conflicting implications for all levels of economic process and organization.*<sup>2</sup>

Concurrently, in modern societies, as they are centered around capitalist economies, change, *by definition*, is inevitable – albeit not continual and simultaneous in all aspects of social life.<sup>3</sup> The prevalence of certain norms and values in society is the precondition for a functioning market economy, which in turn shapes and reshapes those norms and values. Since the capitalist economy is the single most important value sphere in modern societies, other value spheres cannot insulate themselves from the imperatives of economic life – including the social sciences (see Massey, 1999). Especially when the importance of the economy in society is growing, it may be exceedingly difficult to determine the nature of the interaction between changing economic conditions, prevailing norms and social analysis. If the analytical tools are not designed to tackle the complexities and contradictory nature of business-labor-government relations in advanced capitalist societies, they may reflect, rather than critically reflect upon, the nature of the interaction. It is an underlying issue in social analyses of modern society whether concrete changes are in sync with prevailing values, and whether and how those values still make sense in light of the changes (e.g. a work ethic at times of high unemployment; small business values as they influence economic policy, at a time of ever larger corporations). It appears to be safe to say, though, that if judged in terms of prevailing values, it is a key characteristic of modern societies that the operation of existing institutions and organizations is continuously remodulated, and that as a result, slight adjustments may characterize extended periods of time, qualitative improvements may occur over time, along with a growing potential for destruction and disorder.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the first requirement for attempts to understand any aspect of social, political, and economic life in modern societies is that the imminence of change be part of their “program.”

## **SOCIOLOGY BETWEEN STATIC AND DYNAMIC ANALYSIS**

The starting assumption of this essay is that in sociology, most theories analyze (or are understood as analyzing) modern society, like any other social formation, as a type of social structure, or social *order*. Consequently, many sociologists tend to analyze modern societies, whose distinguishing feature is that they are *dynamic*, with means and methods that are implicitly static. This contention is all the more ironic considering that the static/dynamic dichotomy



has been an issue since the beginning of sociology.<sup>5</sup> Yet in most cases, the distinction between static and dynamic dimensions of social life, and corresponding modes of analysis, differentiates between features of social organizations and processes that can be observed equally in all societies (at least in all societies of the same type; such as religion, family, authority, and language), and features that are variable between societies; the former are called “static” elements, the latter “dynamic.” Yet *this* use of the terms presumes that as far as the social sciences are concerned, social life does not undergo qualitative changes that call for a comprehensive reorientation in terms of the methods and theoretical categories employed, how these are to be used, and which guiding questions social scientists should strive to answer. Along these lines, typically, the social sciences – economics, sociology, political science – tend to be static in their basic presuppositions, research designs, and theoretical foundations, even when they are concerned with the study of processes.<sup>6</sup>

Much sociological research practice assimilates the study of social processes to priorities that curtail the kind of apprehension which would do justice to the character of those processes, and their implications for perspectives on future social change. *As a discipline*, sociology tends to reify the vitality and to reduce the actual complexity, contradictory nature, and volatility of social life, by employing key concepts that “domesticate,” rather than engender recognition of, a subject matter which, in some fashion, always is exceptional (e.g. social problems, social conflict). This is not surprising since, as Talcott Parsons put it in *The Social System*, “the treatment of . . . problems . . . concerned with processes of change of the system itself, that is, processes resulting in changes in the structure of the system . . . comes . . . *logically* last, and presupposes some level of theoretical solution of the other two [theory of social structure and theory of motivational processes]” (Parsons, 1951, p. 480). In particular, the project of sociology as a social science (and a professional field) based on a unifying sociological theory has remained prone to conceptualizing modern society as a social order that cannot halt change, rather than as a social order-social process nexus.<sup>7</sup>

To point out this paradox is neither to deny the achievements of the social sciences to date, nor to fetishize the current preoccupation with how to make economies, labor markets, and social policies more flexible, nor to suggest that it should be possible without delay to state what a more dynamic social science will look like and what it will achieve. Instead, the purpose is to stress that, under present circumstances, definite (if tenuous) steps toward synchronizing the social sciences with the dynamic nature of modern society ought to be taken, which is not to suggest that the dynamism of global capitalism is a positive or negative force, but one that only can be scrutinized with means that fit the challenge.

Globalization is the current transformation of capitalism whose elucidation constitutes the decisive analytical challenge sociology as a discipline must embrace. For this purpose, I understand *sociology as the science of modern, capitalist society*. The result is a corresponding reconceptualization of sociological theory as a *dynamic theory*, or *theory as process*.<sup>8</sup>

### *Dynamic Analysis Reconsidered*

The endeavor to formulate key concepts and key theoretical categories is directed at working definitions and tools that are independent of time and space – relating to “static,” or unchanging features of social life (including processes that replicate the same patterns). For analytical purposes, these definitions are to provide social analysts with secure ground where in fact there is flux, to facilitate empirical research and data collection in a manner that insures that the results attained by different research approaches and traditions are compatible contributions to sociology as a social science. These purposes are central to sociological theory more generally. Ideally, the basic concepts must be formulated so that social researchers become sensitive to comparative-historical variations between societies – to “dynamic,” or variable features. Since the mid-1980s, economic sociologists have drawn attention to the fact that economic institutions are socially and culturally “embedded” – a circumstance that is telling in at least two ways: that sociologists concerned above all with the economic sphere were the ones to recognize the importance of dynamic features in the classical sense, and that this “discovery” occurred so late in the first century of sociological history.<sup>9</sup>

During much of the twentieth century, social theorists and social researchers started out from the assumption that their primary task was to identify fundamental laws governing the social world, and to determine their nature and relative importance (e.g. bureaucratization, secularization, urbanization). While these laws were assumed to be independent of specific socio-historic circumstances, those circumstances in turn were regarded as manifestations of the underlying laws. According to this quasi-objectivist reading of the nature and logic of modern capitalist society, the task of the social sciences was to provide a representation of evolving social life in terms of the relative autonomy of economic, political and social processes, respectively. However, as societies grew increasingly differentiated and complex, a growing number of social scientists ventured to proclaim the arrival of successive evolutionary stages characterized by new constellations between business, labor, and government – an exercise that became a staple of social research. Among these stages were organized capitalism, finance capitalism, state capitalism, the corporatist state,

post-industrial society, welfare-state capitalism, and transnational capitalism – to name just a few.

The understanding of the static-dynamic dichotomy underlying this perspective on successive, presumably higher stages of social development is different: “dynamic” now refers to changes in the social world that constitute qualitatively different societal contexts, necessitating more or less far-reaching reorientations of the respective frameworks and apparatuses in the social sciences. Irrespective of how determined the efforts may have been to put the social sciences on a new foundation, however, to date none was compelling enough, for whatever reasons, to engender a genuinely different and qualitatively superior basis for, and approach to, studying modern society – *one that would have influenced any of the social sciences as a whole*. Today, the question appears to be whether recalibrating sociology and its tools will be sufficient, or whether we will need an entirely new set of tools, unburdened by past failures – and whether *such* would be possible.

By the end of the twentieth century, many established assumptions about the nature of modern society, and the relationship between economy, society, and the state had become highly problematic. Until the 1970s, for instance, a majority of social scientists had assumed the inevitability, in the long run, of a definite trend from the “primacy of the economy” to the “primacy of politics,” facilitated by the growth of bureaucratic forms of organization in all spheres of life, including business, labor, and government. The trend that began with restructuring during the 1980s, however, and continued during the 1990s under the heading of “globalization,” points toward a condition where politics is becoming increasingly marginal to economics, even in the most powerful nation-states. As the degree of organization, and the extent of planning among and within large capitalist corporations has been reaching ever new, unprecedented heights since the collapse of Soviet Communism, the Cold War question – “market or plan?” – receives attention no longer. Yet themes related to the nature of bureaucratization have returned to the center of attention of empirical and theoretical researchers, rather than taking the form of working hypotheses whose validity can be implicitly presumed: there appear to be countervailing tendencies at different levels of social, political, and most of all, economic organization (see, e.g. Nelson, 1992; Gomes-Casseres, 1996).

The challenge is how to approach the arguably most intricate, contradictory, and as of yet inconclusive social research complex of our time. As Moishe Postone (1999, p. 3) put it,

We are in the midst of a far-reaching transformation of advanced industrialized societies and the global order that has dramatically reasserted the central importance of historical dynamics and large-scale structural changes for contemporary historical and social theory.

This transformation of social, political, economic and cultural life has been as fundamental as that involved in the transition from nineteenth century liberal capitalist societies to the state-interventionist bureaucratic forms of the twentieth century.

Undoubtedly, the endeavor to meet this challenge can follow a number of different strategies. In the traditional sense, the most scientifically legitimate would be to compile detailed, empirically sound analyses of all important aspects of the current changes. However, this venue is contingent on the continued adequacy of the methods and categories employed. If the hypothesis presented here is germane to the current historical juncture and its implications for a reconceptualization of sociology, the methods of empirical research may not prevent the recognition of change in general, but of the kind of change that calls for *different tools*. Determining whether there are distinct indications about aspects of globalization that constitute the latter kind of change, is a task that requires an explicitly theoretical approach, however flawed it may be. But as long as taking on this challenge is understood as a serious attempt to identify trends, rather than claiming objective, inalterable truths, an important contribution to understanding the link between the past, the present, its possible futures, and social analysis may yet result. In this context, the true significance of globalization may not be so much whether there is such a clearly identifiable, inevitable trend, or how exactly it is manifesting itself (in both instances, the answers depend on exactly how the questions are framed, and whether definite answers are possible as long as the process has not reached completion), but that it highlights the *need to rethink the project of sociology as a social science, its purpose, its tools, and its relationship to contemporary society – to make explicit insights that have remained tacit for too long.*

## TRANSFORMATIONS OF CAPITALISM

Since the history of the social sciences is imbued with process-oriented concerns, past achievements as well as recent developments have highlighted the need for, and prepared the shift from static to dynamic analysis. To illustrate how to ask what a more dynamic social science would need to achieve, and what kinds of guiding questions sociology as the science of modern society might embrace, I will recast the rationale of the volume I edited, *Transformations of Capitalism. Economy, Society, and the State in Modern Times* (2000; hereafter referred to as *Transformations*). This collection of analyses by social scientists is centered around the analysis of five major transformations in the constellation between business, labor, and government during the twentieth century:

- (1) the rise of “big business”: industrial society between organizational concentration and finance capitalism (Veblen, Berle and Means, Aron, Chandler);

- (2) laissez-faire in decline: from the Great Depression into the post-World War II era (Keynes, Kindleberger, Polanyi, Schumpeter);
- (3) the golden age of capitalism: large corporations and the regulatory state (Galbraith, Adams, Jordan, Offe);
- (4) restructuring business, labor and government: deindustrialization, entrepreneurialism, and the decline of labor (Bluestone & Harrison, Cohen & Zysman, Kolko, Fligstein); and
- (5) multinational corporations prepare the global economy: the integration of markets and the erosion of the nation-state (Block, Belsman and Vidich, Gilpin, Helleiner, Stallings and Streeck).

While these transformations have occurred in all western industrial societies more or less in this order, the sequencing is modelled after the pattern characteristic of the United States as the most powerful political economy. The concrete manifestation of each transformation in the different “capitalist” countries shows great variation; in Germany, e.g. the crisis of laissez-faire occurred in a less pronounced fashion than in the United States, because Germany did not have then, and does not have today, as strong a tradition of free-market thinking and policy; similarly, France has had a much longer tradition of government intervention in the economy than the United States. The number of variations is at least as large as the number of societies examined (See, e.g. Hickson, 1993; Albert, 1993; Thurow, 1992).

Still, there appears to be a broad consensus among social scientists and social theorists (not just those included) that the above sequencing is both appropriate and necessary, although frequently the language employed shows some variation. For instance, the result of the first transformation often is described as the modern corporation, big business capitalism, organized capitalism, or finance capitalism; of the second transformation, state capitalism, authoritarian monopoly capitalism, or state-interventionist economy; of the third, the corporatist state; of the fourth, the service-oriented economy, or postfordism; and of the fifth, globalization, transnational capitalism, or network capitalism.

The theme underlying the different contributions to *Transformations*, which also was the guiding principle for compiling the volume, is that *control* and *organization* are key categories for assessing the direction and importance of capitalism as it underwent crucial changes. These categories constitute a departure from mainstream thinking about developments in the economic sphere insofar as they do not explain the latter economically, but sociologically in relation to economic and governmental imperatives. The stance behind this choice resulted from the objective to “[bring] together readings from social analysts who first identified a decisive institutional trend and from writers who

explore its social and psychological effects in contemporary society,” as the series editors, Robert Jackall and Arthur Vidich, put it (see *Transformations*, p. ix). Moreover, these readings are to be understood as contributions to social theory (as opposed to sociological theory), in this case in the tradition of Karl Marx and Max Weber. The rise of modern capitalism, combined with the trend toward ever greater bureaucratization, engendered the form of social organization for whose analysis the theories of Marx and Weber are the most powerful reference points. In particular, Marx’s interest in identifying the law of motion in a society based on the capitalist mode of production, and Weber’s endeavor to present bureaucratization as an instance of rationalization, are both superb and necessary foundations for analyzing capitalism’s transformations in the twentieth century.

However, the central conclusion of the volume is that there is neither a trend underlying these transformations that could be construed as progress without further qualification, nor a linear trajectory that would be clearly identifiable with available means. This holds even though it is possible to observe that “economic definitions of value [continue to] replace the non-economic forms of value that once determined the importance of a multiplicity of contexts and realms of human activity and forms of social life” and that increases in the “control and organization of social forces benefits the purposes of corporations that have a vested interest in making sure that the economic process will not become and – perhaps more importantly – will not *appear* to become, more stable and reliable,” while further perfecting “patterns of organizational control toward sustaining and enhancing profit opportunities” (*Transformations*, pp. 416, 429f). As mentioned above, many social scientists concerned until the 1970s (the first three transformations) with the relationship between economy, society, and the state, may have been certain that there was a clear trend toward greater bureaucratization of all spheres of life, the continued expansion of large corporations in the economic process, growing government control, solidified labor involvement in management decisions, and generally more cooperation between business, labor, and government. Indeed, few would have predicted, or even conceived of the possibility, that the following decades (the fourth and fifth transformations) would bring about a major break in the presumed trend, and redefine and redesign corporations, governments, and labor unions at all levels of organization, and their interrelations. The increasing relevance and power of the interventionist state did not seem to point toward a resurgence of laissez-faire as neoliberalism, during the 1990s, accompanying the greatest and longest merger wave in history, combined with the concurrent (if provisional) withdrawal of the state from its previous regulatory control and maintenance of an elaborate social welfare net. Perhaps the single most important lesson to

be learned from the study of twentieth-century capitalist transformations is that there is not much of a basis for predicting *with any degree of certainty* likely trends in the twenty-first century – which is neither to say that we should not concern ourselves with the question whether there are such trends at all, nor that there will not be any such trends.

## A UNITARY TRADITION OF SOCIAL THEORY?

In his review of *Transformations*, Gary Herrigel has contended that the perspective emerging from the various contributions describing the five major transformations of capitalism in the twentieth century, as well as from my framing of those analyses, advances and extends the “unitary tradition” in social theory, the assumption “that there was one process and that it had a single and determinable directionality . . . Indeed, it was taken to be one of the great discoveries of modern economic science” (Herrigel, 2000, p. 405). He distinguishes between the unitary tradition and non-unitary perspectives and analyses of modes of economic organizations and processes. He indeed asserts that all the contributions included in the volume advocate the unitary perspective, and that this attribute applies to an array of additional theorists not included. He formulates his central criticism as follows:

The general and unitary theoretical ambition that defines the tradition results in a self-blinding dynamic in which theorists are unable to recognize the highly particular character and context dependence of what they take to be general developmental dynamics in industrial societies. Indeed, in my view, this unitary tradition’s linear and homogenizing conception of capitalist development has led to a profound underestimation of a wide array of perfectly viable forms of organization, control, struggle and governance that have been constitutive of the various developmental experiences of industrial societies throughout the twentieth century. The unitary tradition’s failure to appreciate alternative forms of organization is a great limitation. At best, it creates a sense of false necessity in the interpretive orientation of the theorist. At worst, it shackles the transformative imagination of the theorist (Herrigel, 2000, pp. 406f).

Rather than responding to Herrigel’s criticisms point by point, I will focus on his claim that the volume as a whole advocates a “unitary view of capitalism and its trajectory of development”, and embraces affirmatively the implications that result from this view of capitalist transformations, for the future of modern societies (Herrigel, 2000, p. 405). My intention is twofold: first, to clarify the problem of studying capitalist transformations, by linking the anthology’s aims to the on-going discussion of globalization; and second, to relate Herrigel’s cogitations about social theory and critical theory to implications resulting from the perspective on twentieth-century capitalism basic to *Transformations*, as they pertain to the future of sociology and sociological theory.<sup>10</sup>

Herrigel's central criticism that this unitary tradition overlooks key differences and necessary distinctions regarding how capitalism has been operating as of late, is a critique of social theory more generally. There are several basic issues at stake regarding his suggestion that not only my theoretically oriented framing of the transformations of capitalism, but also the twenty-one contributions by twenty-six political economists and economic sociologists adhere to this perspective. Is there a unitary tradition? What does this unitary tradition look like, and who are its main representatives? Would these representatives agree that they are "unitarians"? Is there an alternative reading of the unitary perspective?

The central problem of the argument about the unitary tradition is that it is an instance of ascribing a "quality" to diverse theoretical and social research projects that cannot be subsumed, legitimately, under a common perspective and intent without the consent of those involved. This holds even more since the existence of this "unitary" tradition is not a generally agreed upon fact, and reference point, of social-theoretical debate. Instead, it is a term that reveals an attitude toward theory that is similar to critiques of frameworks often referred to, in derogatory fashion, as "grand theories."<sup>11</sup>

He proposes a non-unitary perspective, whose advantages are that it is less certain and definite about the future, that it constitutes a more viable conception of critical theory, and a far superior basis for a better future than what the unitary tradition allows for. Unfortunately, this stance perpetuates the practice of presenting other perspectives as incompatible with one's own – which makes almost impossible social science as a cooperative project capable of advancing even though, in fact, there may be affinity, and constructive cooperation a distinct possibility.

### *The Intent of Transformations*

The message that emerged from my endeavor to extract a narrative of the twentieth century from the literature of what may be the most expansive research area in the social sciences, "capitalism," is neither that there is one homogeneous trend characterizing the direction of modern economic development, nor that this trend is clearly identifiable. In this endeavor, I tried to resist the temptation to reiterate truisms as well as insufficiently confirmed prejudices about economy, society and the state in modern times whose implicitly presumed "validity" no longer can be distinguished from ideology. Yet *Transformations* does bear testimony to the fact that over the course of the twentieth century, there has been continuous growth in the size of corporations, and in the assets they concentrate. Initially, this trend constituted "concentration with



centralization,” but during the 1990s it turned into “concentration without centralization,” as Bennett Harrison put it (Harrison, [1994], 1997, pp. 8–12; also *Transformations*, p. 425). Modern capitalism produces tremendous wealth and technological capabilities, with the totality of modern society working as a social system in which economic imperatives fulfill multiple functions, from the political to the para-religious (see Deutschmann, 1999). In effect, large corporations operate like small state apparatuses whose “constitutions” are constructed to maintain organizational stability and expanding profit opportunities. Among these functions are: supplying guidelines for individual behavior and social interaction; providing a center of meaning that furnishes priorities for conduct of life; and defining the perimeter within which issues that can be publicly discussed, questioned, and criticized.

Modern capitalism is characterized by contradictions related to the fact that under conditions of globalization and at the global level, the assumption that the wealth and technology being created increase the economic well-being of the population as a whole, a majority, or even a growing faction of people, must be reexamined. As modern capitalism advances, it enhances the wealth and power of private interests, and for the majority of the world’s still growing population, appears to produce worsening living conditions. The point here is not that this condition is morally infuriating, but that as long as these contradictions continue to characterize modern capitalism, it is impossible to predict with certainty future developments in economy, society, and the state.

Admitting the existence of contradictions does not imply that, in the foreseeable future, reconciling conflicting trends and overcoming the tension between prevailing values and societal change is a concrete possibility, or that social researchers possess a clear set of normative criteria by which to judge socio-economic conditions and developments. In fact, recognizing the prevalence of profound contradictions in human civilization today is above all a necessary precondition for framing questions about the importance of transformations, especially of globalization. As long as there are contradictions, the trajectory of future developments is not predetermined once and for all, and there may be a link between how we analyze and theorize change, and what turns it will take.

I should add that neither of the above statements – that the totality of modern society works as a social system in which economic imperatives fulfill multiple functions related to maintaining social and political order, and that contradictions continue to characterize modern capitalism – are unqualified and comprehensive. The intention of those statements is not to suggest that awareness of the omnipresence of economic imperatives and the prevalence of contradictions would provide the code to unlocking the secrets of the present world. Instead,

the purpose of the statements is to emphasize that social researchers need to consider the categorical possibility that all aspects of political, cultural, and social life reflect economic imperatives and the contradictions of modern society, including their own research designs, methods, and objectives.

In my assessment, all of the authors included in the volume would disavow the contention that they are adherents of a unitary interpretation of economic trends in the twentieth century, asserting that the continued growth of large corporations is inevitable, and denying the possibility of a multiplicity of new organizational forms. Despite Herrigel's contention that discerning capitalism in the twentieth century as "one process [with] a single and determinable directionality . . . was taken to be one of the great discoveries of modern economic science" (Herrigel, 2000, p. 405) one central motivation for compiling *Transformations* precisely was that "modern economic science" – I take this to refer to neoclassical economics in particular – did not acknowledge that the rise of the modern corporation might involve profound consequences for the conditions of economic action and decision-making, and no less so for economic theory, economic analysis, and economic policy. Even if "modern economic science" refers to Keynesian economics, the new conditions were not reflected in terms of their implications for economic analysis and economic theory – focussing, for instance, on how exactly the appearance of big business, as it redefines the functioning of the market process, calls for further differentiation of consumers, households and firms as the primary economic actors, but projected onto regulatory government as a newly emerging economic agent. As the Keynesian perspective is conducive to recognizing that the rise of big business once and for all undermined the viability of *laissez-faire*, it implies that big businesses needed to be protected from their lack of understanding the new economic order in emergence during the first three decades of the twentieth century – by a set of governmental institutions equally strong, or stronger: "The important thing for government is not to do things which individuals are doing already, and to do them a little better or a little worse; but to do those things which at present are not done at all" (Keynes, 2000[1926], p. 116).

The question guiding the organization of *Transformations* was not whether there is a clearly identifiable trend in the changing constellation between business, labor and government in the twentieth century, but *whether there were transformations that mainstream economic theory tended to ignore, which need to be understood for effective analyses of the relationship between the modern capitalist economy and modern society to be possible, and which are essential to an effective assessment of the importance of the transformation currently underway, globalization*. Accordingly, the primary purpose was not to do justice to the empirical complexity and intricacies of changes in, and of,

the constellation between business, labor, and government. Instead, the objective was to ask whether there were changes whose repercussions for political, social and economic analysis must be recognized explicitly. Despite recent developments in neoclassical economics to move closer to the actual features of economic life today (most especially, inspired by Schumpeter, in evolutionary economics – e.g. Hanusch, 1988), the discipline continues to operate on the basis of the tacit presupposition that there is no direct link between changes in the concrete conditions of economic decision-making and the development of economic theory.<sup>12</sup>

Joseph Schumpeter is one of the authors included in *Transformations*, and also one of the political economists Herrigel singles out as an exemplary adherent of the “unitary” tradition. In addition, Schumpeter is relevant in this context as one of the major sources for designing (and developing) a dynamic theory of modern capitalism. Perhaps more than the other authors included (excepting Veblen & Polanyi), Schumpeter’s work is intricate and complex at the same time.<sup>13</sup> His first major work was an attempt to delineate the picture of the economic process basic to classical economics, which he described as a “circular flow” (see Schumpeter, 1908). Without going into detail here, Schumpeter concluded that the static orientation is in conflict with the revolutionary nature of capitalist economies, as described by Marx. To remedy this situation, he wrote *The Theory of Economic Development* (1935[1911]), one of whose express purposes was to present a dynamic supplementation of the static orientation prevalent in economics, centered around the figure of the innovative entrepreneur. Thirty years later, in *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (1942), Schumpeter revisited his early theory of entrepreneurship, in relation to changes that had occurred in the meantime. He concluded that in the new corporate economy, the entrepreneurial function, along with capitalism’s dynamism, had become routinized, and that capitalism betrayed tendencies toward an increasingly organized society based on bureaucratic management – for lack of a better word, “socialism” (as a static order) was about to replace capitalism. Although Herrigel suggests that the “unitarians” affirmed and embraced the developments they observed, this certainly was not true for Schumpeter. He would have preferred the continuation of entrepreneurial capitalism, or at least a corporatist alternative, as formulated in the *Quadregismo Anno* – certainly not the rise of a totally bureaucratized society.<sup>14</sup> Similar, urgently called for qualifications could be shown for most (I would argue, all) of the supposed “unitarians.” Even though they provided building blocks for a narrative of capitalism in the twentieth century, their respective messages complement each other – they did not tell the same story.

Undoubtedly, there are “perfectly viable forms of organization, control, struggle, and governance” (Herrigel, 2000, p. 406f), and their proliferation is likely to increase under conditions of globalization, with the slightest comparative advantage potentially being the deciding factor over business success, survival, and failure. Yet we are not in the position to predict the likelihood of any of these forms to bear fruit, to persist in the face of intensifying competition, and to alter the prevailing mode of ever larger corporations defining the conditions for competition, efficiency, innovation, market participation and investment in the global economy. That a new form of organization is viable under certain conditions, is not an indication that it will be viable in the global economy, and survive under concrete conditions. To put it differently, the authors included did not endeavor to provide evidence for the inevitability of the move toward greater units of economic organization, but the overwhelming character of this trend at different points during the last century. If one is to adopt the normative stance that new forms of organization, control, struggle and governance are desirable, one also needs to ask: how likely are any of them to succeed given the discernable trends to date?

## THEORETICAL SOCIOLOGY IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

There is no incontrovertible mode of social theorizing independently of what is to be theorized. Adherence in the social sciences to a mode of theory that was intended to apply equally at different levels of modernization, rationalization, and organization must not confine our ability to grasp the nature and scope of current changes. This call for reconceptualizing the *social change-social theory nexus* by bidding farewell to established views of social theory is not to suggest that a quasi-anarchical multiplicity of theoretical modes should replace those views. Instead, the possibility, in principle, that holding on to an established mode of theory might prevent us from recognizing key changes and transformations, ought to be cause for concern.

Ours is a time when the need to meet the challenge of analyzing changes in the relationship between business, labor and government is widely acknowledged. *Globalization* has become short-hand for the need to reorient theoretical frameworks for empirical analysis so as to foster our ability to recognize that well-established and purportedly well-proven research practices may not be of much use when applied to the situation at the current historical juncture. Instead, precisely the means that have worked relatively well so far, for “determining reality,” appear not to enable us to do so now, and indeed may impede our ability to recognize the current transformation of global civilization that appears

to emanate above all from changes in the economic sphere – despite the attention many social scientists and public commentators pay to globalization. Yet while we may have at our disposal a multiplicity of theoretical strategies for analyzing what is emerging, we neither should presume as *certain* that the available approaches – far from having been non-controversial in the past – will lead to a clear understanding of emerging forms of social life, nor that they will facilitate recognition of those forms because they have been constructed for a potentially past, superseded (st)age of social development.

For theoretical sociology to bring transparency to the current condition, it is necessary to keep apart the respective modes and purposes of social theory and sociological theory. This distinction may appear pedantic, but it is a distinction that is eminently important. Frequently, sociological theories are judged as if they were social theories, and vice versa, leading. Such leads to a conflation of standards that makes constructive discussion virtually impossible. Distinguishing *sociological* theory and *social* theory is a necessary precondition for constructive debate in sociology. Drawing on Althusser, Mouzelis (1995:3-8) has identified the following types of theoretical sociology: (1) *sociological theory*: analytical and heuristic devices (or “tools”) developed to examine a phenomenon (or question); (2) *social theory*: socio-historically descriptive representations of society at a certain stage of its development; and (3) *critical theory*: critical standards for determining which tools and representations are most adequate for understanding the significance of a phenomenon, action paradigm, dimension of social life, or historical reference.

In more general terms, social theories constitute historically specific, substantive theories of broad societal transformations that manifest themselves more or less clearly in societies of the same type, which are empirically verifiable and reveal universalistic tendencies more or less clearly. Often, social theories are presented as global interpretations based on selective categories that are presumed to be decisive features of the society at hand. Accordingly, in this case the critical impulse is directed at the identification of the dimensions most important to our understanding of the society’s evolutionary trajectory.

Sociological theory stands for the construction of “basic conceptual tools” for purposes of heuristic utility; they cannot be “verified” empirically, but they promote systematic analytical frameworks for making compatible diverse theories that contribute to the analysis of modern society at various levels of complexity. In sociological theory, the critical impulse is directed at what should constitute the best general formal framework for sociology as a discipline with a specific subject domain and a corresponding catalogue of methods for attaining sociological knowledge. Sociological theory is not concerned with concrete sociohistorical conditions and societal formations; it has its model in economic

theory and its successful establishment of a widely accepted conceptual and methodological reference frame.

Under present circumstances, the continuation of the modernist, Enlightenment project of social-scientific inquiry on a qualitatively higher level requires that we regard any attempt to theoretically grasp the nature of diverse dimensions of social life as a tightrope walk that will not lead to determinate depictions of present-day society, but which may prepare the shift from an implicitly static understanding of sociological theory as edifice to a dynamic concept of *theory as process*, designed to analyze change.<sup>15</sup> Unavoidably, formulating the challenge for sociological theorists along such lines entails various pitfalls. The assertion that sociological theory, from its very design, is not capable of doing justice to change, might open the door, in some quarters,

- to a conflation between different types of theories (e.g. social, sociological and critical) that ignores subtle differences, which often are decisive;
- to reductionist dismissals that the very project of sociological theory is flawed yet in another regard, and not worth pursuing further; and
- to hypostatizing the importance of focussing on change, at the expense of the study of order, which remains indispensable to the study of change.

How to read theories of capitalism, how to interpret them, how to relate them to each other – are all equally important questions on whose answers depends the possibility of analyzing capitalism, and modern society. Modern society is constantly torn between the forces of order and the forces of change. The challenge of theoretically grasping the nature of modern society, therefore, is to confront the tensions that are characteristic of it. To theorize modern society (and any aspect of it) without confronting the kind of tensions resulting from basic contradictions, is to apply standards whose adequacy is doubtful. To avoid any of the above mentioned pitfalls regarding sociological theories being implicitly static, it is necessary to show:

- how classical theorists (in particular Max, Durkheim and Weber) were oriented toward designing sociology as the social science of a dynamic society, though most sociologists who followed tended to neglect this orientation in their interpretations and applications of the classics' theories;
- how different sociological theories treat and cope with change;
- how their treatment of change is related to the underlying conception of the task of sociological theory;
- how they frame the study and historical context of modern society; and most of all,
- how they do, or do not, facilitate the “tracking” of current changes, under the heading of “globalization.”

There are few road-signs or road-maps informing us as to how to go about trying to reconcile with, or even to relate to each other, the different theoretical traditions that have been elaborated and refined over the course of the twentieth century – on any subject matter for whose analysis there are multiple approaches. One of the ironies of current social-scientific practice is the fact that as the division of labor within the individual disciplines continues to increase, there is no effort to engage in a sustained discussion about measures and standards for determining *how theories ought to be read, interpreted, compared, and applied*. We find ourselves in a situation where in “theoretical discussions” practically any assertion can be formulated about any single theory or theoretical tradition, on the basis of almost any imaginable set of criteria, without there being more than a token expectation that the assertion ought to be backed up by evidence in the form of textual references, interpretive accuracy, or explicit acknowledgement of the specific research interest or question that informs the specific theoretical perspective (see Boron, 1999). While the need for agreed-upon criteria for what constitutes scientific evidence is basic to most areas of empirically oriented social-scientific research, no comparable discussion about the need for such criteria for theoretical claims, or claims about others’ theoretical claims, has occurred on a broad scale. By necessity, the precondition for meaningful debate between conflicting approaches to the theoretically informed study of the same or similar phenomena or problems is that we explicitly recognize the guiding question and interest of the different approaches, and that we relate to this question or interest the chosen strategy for investigating the phenomenon or problem at hand. Ingrained practice, to be sure, tends to be the opposite: to apply standards and to presuppose as decisive an interest whose compatibility with the approach or theory in point is very much in doubt, if existent at all (see Dahms, 1997).

The following imperatives appear to be preconditions for interpreting, applying, critiquing and comparing theories of modern society, and conducive to studying the link between social order and social change:

- *infer the legitimacy of theoretical projects*, since starting out with the assumption that a project is not legitimate will prevent adequate evaluation of its contribution;
- *presume fallibility*: theories generally are not adequate depictions of any aspect of social life, but specific, more or less well-grounded and circumspect attempts to adequately depict, presumably decisive features of particular aspects or dimensions of social interaction, social order, or social processes;
- *identify the guiding question* of a theory or theoretical tradition, with as much precision as possible (which needs to be reaffirmed regularly);

- *affirm theoretical pluralism*, without conceding to relativism;
- *adopt theoretical agnosticism*, since very few theories were constructed in the interest of “explaining everything”;
- *evaluate theories in terms of their own standards*, as deduced from the guiding question, before applying critical standards that may be external to the theory’s purpose;
- *compare different theories via their guiding questions*, and the inner logic of the problems, phenomena, or processes they endeavor to elucidate;
- *employ a critical-theoretical approach*, as a perspective that posits that only by combining competing theories may we attain an adequate understanding of these theories’ respective contributions, and of the nature of modern society;
- *recognize the need to combine multiple theories and methods* pertinent to studying the subject matter at hand;
- *acknowledge the fleeting, preliminary nature of depictions of social reality* at any level;
- *focus on the point of tension* between the forces that impact on the dimension of social life at issue;
- *remain cognizant of the danger of standpoint* (e.g. ideological, race, class, gender, ethnicity), without necessarily reconceptualizing the research design to eliminate all possible biases.

The purpose of this catalogue of imperatives is not to formulate commandments of sorts for prudent social theorizing, independently of specific research interests and questions, and with the expectation that such commandments might be followed by theoretical sociologists. Rather, the purpose of the list is to begin formulating a set of criteria that appear to be necessary for preparing theories of modern society which, if taken into consideration, might function as reminders for how to work with and between different theoretical traditions, none of which can lay claim to having provided sufficient answers or a clear strategy about how to theorize the contemporary world in change. In this sense, the catalogue may be regarded as an endeavor to begin formulating *a genuinely modernist attitude to analyzing social life*.

## **TOWARD A CRITICAL THEORY OF ADVANCED CAPITALISM**

To illustrate what would constitute a different approach and what kind of perspective it might engender, I will now turn to a theoretical tradition that Gary Herrigel explicitly refers to, whose contributions are germane to the study of capitalist transformations, and which, in several ways, is especially pertinent to



the design of a dynamic sociological theory – the critical theory of the Frankfurt School.<sup>16</sup> This tradition is among the most frequently misunderstood and misinterpreted attempts to elucidate the contradictory nature of modern societies.

There are mostly three ways in which critical theory directly pertains to the issues addressed so far. First, critical theory is the third pillar of theoretical sociology, aside from social theory (theory as end-product), and sociological theory (theory as a means).<sup>17</sup> Secondly, *dynamic* theory must comprise key tenants of critical theory: since the inception of the critique of political economy in the writings of Marx, the critical theory of the Frankfurt School as a continuation of Hegelian and Marxian dialectic, has been concerned with capitalism's dynamism.<sup>18</sup> And finally, critical theory is explicitly concerned with the need to recognize the possibilities for a sociology of modern society that approaches its promise as a social science, through the linking and reciprocal criticism of the approaches that make contributions to the study of any aspect of social, political, cultural or economic life. Indeed, critical theorists tend to be more willing than adherents of other theoretical approaches, to consider the nexus between existing contradictions in society, social analysis, and social theory.

To show how critical theory is central to dynamic theory, moreover, it is necessary to ask how to distinguish critical theory from other ("traditional") types of theory, and how to identify its interest and purpose (see Horkheimer, 1986[1937]). Toward this end, it is necessary to identify the *guiding question* of critical theory, and how it differs from the kind of questions pursued by social theorists and sociological theorists who are not primarily critical theorists. The inclusion of critical theory in this discussion has the additional advantage of illustrating how one must read theories of modern, capitalist society – to demonstrate how the shift to dynamic theory has become indispensable.

In different contexts and at different times, the interest and purpose of critical theory have been delineated in a variety of ways. "Critical Theory" began, and frequently still is identified with, the attempt by members of the Institute of Social Research, the so-called Frankfurt School, to construct a twentieth-century version of Marxist analysis, by incorporating advances made in philosophy and in the social sciences. Today, especially in the American context, critical theory denotes a still growing range of theoretical endeavors whose interest is in illuminating precisely those dimensions of social life which at one time appeared, or continue to appear, non-controversial to most social scientists, who tend to regard these dimensions as integral to modern society, and inalterable. Marx's critique of political economy is the prototype of this kind of critical theory, and it still serves, implicitly or explicitly, as the model for other critical theories, such as feminism (focussing on implicitly presumed

gender relations) and postmodernism (focussing on Western rationalist bias in science, politics, culture, and an array of other spheres of life) – to name just the most well-known variants.

In relation to these variations of critical theory, there is a broad range of possible conceptions of the purpose, task, and method of critical theory. Attempts are far and few in between, however, to determine whether it is possible to identify a common denominator that facilitates a tentatively systematic circumscription of the defining features of critical theory, on the one hand, and the specific responsibility of critical theory (though not of all critical theorists) in relation to “non-critical” theories in the social sciences, on the other hand.

The working definition I propose runs as follows: *Critical theories are concerned with identifying and analyzing those dimensions of social life that “traditional” theories presume as non-problematic (e.g. capitalist, gender-based, and Western definitions of social reality). The rigorously critical elucidation of these dimensions is essential to determining what it would take to solve, or to resolve once and for all, the social problems (e.g. poverty, unemployment, discrimination, exclusion) prevalent in modern societies today – in light of the fact that modern societies are not capable of overcoming these social problems given currently prevailing conditions. The kind of fundamental change that would be necessary for solving these problems, however, would change the nature of modern society.*

Contrary to most other characterizations of the key thematic of critical theories, this definition has the advantage of providing a clear set of criteria for determining the present interest and function of critical theory in general, of special critical theories, and of the tradition of Frankfurt School critical theory in particular – in relation to their precursors. The guiding question each special critical theory endeavors to answer must be positioned in relation to the overall purpose of critical theory, for a constructive debate about the contribution of critical theory to sociology today to be possible. In addition, focus on guiding questions enables us to ascertain the degree to which the theoretical objectives of successive incarnations of critical theory, in relation to changing societal contexts, are in sync with each other, and with the first critical theory, Marx’s critique of political economy.<sup>19</sup>

Understood along these lines, critical theory is not so much about correct answers as about *pertinent questions*. “Traditional,” non-critical theorists pursue questions whose legitimacy has been firmly established, and examine dimensions of social life with which social scientists have been concerned for decades. It is for this reason that concern with the guiding question of a theory, or theoretical tradition, is so important. If critical theory’s overall guiding question is

not adequately understood, or that of a special critical theory is not recognized in its distinct nature, adequate interpretation both of the interest and the answer (or answers) is impossible. The issue of guiding questions is one of the unduly neglected aspects of theoretical debate, but also a promising point for anchoring a constructive debate about theory.

### **“UNITARY THEORY” OR UNITARY READING OF NON-UNITARY THEORIES?**

In a key section of his article, entitled “Alternative Critical Theory,” Herrigel (2000, pp. 416f) advocates a perspective I would describe as critical theory in the weak sense:

In the unitary tradition, “critical theory” set itself the task of using reason . . . to identify ways in which the structure of the social order – capitalism – systematically stifled or repressed the realization of a very particular transhistorical conception of human potential. In the alternative view, critical analysis tries to point to ways in which active and present possibilities for the development of human capacity might be realized, either through the elimination of constraint or the identification of possibility . . . The alternative tradition expects the evolution and transformation of the social world to be driven by politics and struggle and for all outcomes to be provisional and subject to revision.

Critical theory in the strong sense is not concerned with some of the problems, and with possibilities of improving conditions of life in society in some regards, but with what it would take for conditions to emerge that are necessary preconditions for improvements in *decisive regards*. Overcoming alienation, commodity fetishism, reification, instrumental reason, functionalist reason – the focal points of successive stages of critical theory from Marx, via Lukács, Horkheimer and Adorno, to Habermas (see Dahms, 1998) – is not important in the sense that these are features social researchers have the option of taking into consideration, but that these are issues that must be acknowledged under any circumstances. In this sense, it is necessary to recognize that critical theory, as the designation suggests, constitutes a set of theoretical arguments, with limited (if any) concrete practical import. Its objective is to determine the degree to which prevailing conditions limit the possibility, and the possibilities to conceive of, alternative forms of life and organization – however, precisely *not* in the sense of one “very particular transhistorical conception of human potential.” It is *possible* to interpret the first generation of Frankfurt School critical theory accordingly, but *neither necessary, nor appropriate*.

Critical analyses in the weak sense do not intend to lead to a rigorous perspective on the link between prevailing values, patterns of change, and future possibilities. Yet without an explicitly formulated critical perspective on the

link between values, dynamism, and the potential for “desirable” change, it will not be possible for sociologists (and social scientists) to confront what may be the decisive challenge: *how to facilitate change of pace from a society whose definition of collective identity, perspective on key social problems, and basic values are centered around a highly productive and efficient capitalist economy, to a society that preserves and augments the attained level of productivity, efficiency, technological progress and rationalization, in a manner that complies with, and does not undermine, what remains of social norms and values – as the basis of pro-active collective action fostering cooperation at the societal level (at which most important problems will have to be tackled), without endangering economic well-being and development.*<sup>20</sup>

I agree with the stance Herrigel takes regarding alternative forms of organization and transformative imagination (Herrigel 2000, p. 407), but clearly we disagree on how theory plays a role in how to make possible the transition to a future that is more desirable than the present, in whatever regard. The approach to critical theory which I regard as binding, forces the issue of possible futures in a different, more fundamental way. If one wants to take a systematically theoretical tack, it is decisive to spell out, as clearly as possible, how exactly it is that we can reflect about what it will take to think about possible futures in a way that will not reproduce key patterns of the current, problematic condition in a manner that precludes alternative perspectives. Precisely for this purpose, uncompromising theoretical examination is indispensable. Asking whether there are macro-dimensions that only can be ignored at the price of severely impaired perspectives is a necessary precondition for thinking possible futures. Changing practices within the enterprise, and between enterprises, are not necessarily positively correlated with possible futures. They can be, but are more likely not to be. To say they are implies assumptions about the link between organizational changes at the shop floor and at the national, international, and global level. Any adaptive change must be suspected of solidifying existing patterns, and thus of precluding the possibility of alternative futures. But the point is not to argue that this cannot happen, but that one cannot presume it will happen, without critical investigation. Critical theory is not perfect; but neither is any theory that focusses on aspects of reality that are contingent and as of yet, not completely determined by identifiable factors. Perfection is a standard that has some legitimacy in artistic endeavors. In the sciences, we strive for perfection; but only inanimate matter potentially can be described with any degree of perfection. A societal process that is very much in motion, is not a foil for perfect representation and depiction.

I should emphasize first that I am in general agreement with the thrust of Herrigel’s argument about the possibility of organizational openings and oppor-

tunities under present conditions. However, I am in fundamental disagreement with his contention that *Transformations* does not allow for this kind of an open perspective. In fact, I assert that the difference between our viewpoints is based on conflicting concepts of theory, and the status of theoretical arguments. While Herrigel suggests that “[f]or the unitary tradition, history has a linear directionality in which the human condition either becomes better and better or in which tensions between forms of human potential and given possibilities become increasingly acute” (Herrigel, 2000, p. 412), I would be reluctant to insinuate that many theorists today (or any of the social scientists included in the anthology), were and are given to a reading of complex social life that can be described in such a formulaic fashion. I find more convincing the following kind of approach, formulated in the context of a comprehensive reinterpretation of Marx that is critical of most of his actual or purported followers, as an explicit contribution to an understanding of critical theory that is up to date:

The historical development of capitalist society . . . is socially constituted, nonlinear and nonevolutionary. It is neither contingent and random, as historical change might be in other forms of societies, nor a transhistorical evolutionary or dialectical development; rather, it is a historically specific dialectical development that originates as a result of particular and contingent historical circumstances but then becomes abstractly universal and necessary. The historical dialectic entails ongoing and accelerating processes of the transformation of all aspects of social life, on the one hand, and the ongoing reconstitution of the most fundamental structural features of capitalism, on the other (Postone, 1993, p. 387).

If the purpose of criticizing the unitary tradition in social theory is to emphasize the degree of diversity in social life, then it would have to be proven beyond doubt that this tradition exists, that the uniformity of unitary theorists exists, that they convey one message, and that their actual, not their purported understanding of social processes is fundamentally flawed. In addition to proving that all the social scientists included in *Transformations* are “unitarians,” the specificity of their respective projects would have to be recognized explicitly, and carefully differentiated. To be sure, Herrigel chooses the opposite tack: in order to argue that social life is more diverse than what unitary theory allows for, he first constructs the image of a unitary theory, which then enables him to glance beyond decisive differences and differentiations, to construct the chimera called “unitary tradition.”

With respect to the diverse contributions to *Transformations*, Herrigel’s “unitary” reading is problematic because it glances over precisely the necessary, decisive distinctions in theory, which he argues need to be made in the study of forms of societal life. Is there is a unitary reading in substance? What exactly did the different contributors say? How do their contributions have to be understood? Herrigel’s reading is extremely narrow, suggesting not only that the

theorists had very limited perspectives, that they all argue with definite certainty, and that they affirmatively embraced the trend they described – without allowing for, or acknowledging the desirability, of alternative trajectories.

But is my argument, then, not a replication the same pattern of critique that I have accused Herrigel of attributing to purportedly unitarian theorists, by positing that Herrigel adheres to the static perspective? Is making the distinction between static and dynamic theory, and attributing this distinction to a multiplicity of theorists who would strongly disagree that they are “static theorists”? The point would be well taken. However, in this instance there is a decisive difference between form and substance. Attributing to theorists compliance with a unitarian interpretation of capitalist transformations implies that their descriptive analyses of societal processes coalesce in the conclusion that the “vanishing point” of the transformations in broad strokes is identical, and does not allow for alternative trajectories of change. Suggesting that certain types of theories and their proponents perpetuate a non-dynamic reading of a dynamic world entails a critique that belongs to a different category altogether. Presumably, unitarian theorists would have to subscribe to Herrigel’s interpretation of their intent and the results of their research. Few “static” theorists, however, would accept the corresponding implications regarding their work and analyses. In fact, I would insist that there are no theorists of the modern world who would agree that their work is based on assumptions, categories, concepts, and presuppositions that impede the dynamic study of processes. In this sense, the status of the type of argument presented here is explicitly *critical-theoretical* in the following sense: *how to prepare the analysis of the dynamic nature of social life, as it is impeded by implicitly static research tools, standards for desirable research, and theoretical and conceptual categories employed – which in turn deflect from the need to focus on the dynamic character of modern society.* The rigorously critical elucidation of this static bias is essential to determining what is necessary for preparing viable attempts to solve, or to resolve once and for all, the social problems prevalent in modern societies. To date, static analysis of dynamic social life has been endemic to modern societies. Whether developing an apparatus designed for dynamic analysis will enhance the likelihood of overcoming social problems, with or without undergoing fundamental change that would more or less radically transform modern society – only time will tell.

The link between implicit attitudes toward social theory, and attitudes toward social reality, calls for careful clarification. Often, one attitude prevails regarding reality, while another applies with regard to theory. The primary problem is over-generalization. In this instance, a sustained “anti-unitary” argument is presented with respect to social processes, in the context of a unitary reading

of different social theories. The very idea of “unitary tradition” appears problematic. It purports a similarity between theoretical perspectives that is not likely to result even if determined efforts were to be made to reach an agreement. In addition, it suggests a consistency in the perspective of individual theorists over time that would require a near-complete lack of theoretical flexibility and sensitivity to changing conditions. Accordingly, I would slightly modify Herrigel’s contention that:

Understanding the social, political and economic order as a heterodox constellation of contingently related social arrangements (possibilities and constraints), and the past as a reservoir of information that can have practical value for problem solving in the present, makes for a very different conception of the role of social theory and of “critical” analysis (2000, p. 416)

– as follows: *in order to grasp the contingencies and contradictions characteristic of the modern world, we need to allow for multiple conceptions of the role of social theory, sociological theory, and critical theory.* Under conditions of globalization, the challenge is to accomplish what should have been achieved a century ago, but which, for many reasons, was not possible at the time – the formulation of a dynamic theoretical approach to a constantly changing world. Today, facing the challenge and formulating such an approach, to begin thinking “the world” in a manner that fits the subject matter, may be the necessary precondition for returning to the social sciences the kind of perspective that will lead to overcoming the growing practical and political irrelevance of disciplines whose primary *raison d’être* appears to be their perpetual reconstitution as a professional field. The promise of the social sciences in general, and of sociology in particular, was from the outset the development of an explicitly dynamic theory as the only suitable “means” for grasping what cannot be grasped once and for all, as long as the process called “modern society” is still underway, evolving here and now, devolving there and then, without betraying much of an inkling of whether, when and where it will come to some kind of violent or non-violent completion.<sup>21</sup> At least as importantly, however, basic sociological concepts must reflect the fact that their content and the relations among concepts will change over time – thus the need for *dynamic* conceptualizations.

## CONCLUSION

The claim that sociological theories tend to be implicitly static requires subtle and careful consideration and reformulation. The crucial point is neither that sociological theory denies the fact of change in modern society, nor that it is not concerned with change; evidently, the opposite is the case. Instead, the basic

design of sociological theory, and theory in the social sciences more generally, is oriented toward providing a reference frame that allows for the study of modern society – focussing on structural elements above all – in a manner that ignores the need to frame research to facilitate observation of change *as it is occurring*, or soon thereafter. Moreover, sociology as the science of modern society will not live up to its purpose of revealing underlying tendencies unless sociologists are willing to ponder their pervasiveness, and the directions if those tendencies. Tracking change as it occurs also must not be a purpose in itself; it is a necessary precondition for assessments of apparent directions taken, in relation to the possibility of alternative trajectories of social, political, cultural and economic development.

Sociological theory, if it is not explicitly oriented toward developing analytical and theoretical tools designed to recognize how and in what directions patterns of social life are changing, from its very design and *by necessity* will become an obstacle to adequate social analysis. The challenge, therefore, is to conceive of a framework for identifying and analyzing change as it occurs, to anticipate its implications for the nature, direction, and pattern of future constellations between economy, society, culture and the state (see esp. Castells, 1996). Such a framework must avoid determinate assumptions about social reality and its evolutionary tendencies; there is no aspect of social life that is closed off from critical reconsideration, most especially the various, implicitly presumed definitions of social, political, cultural and economic reality, and assumptions about its fundamental laws, and its malleability (or lack thereof). Such a framework also is in constant danger of falling prey to holistic visions of the societal future that result from hypostatizing one specific dimension, or set of dimensions, as the decisive feature that must be the focus of social research, and whose analysis is the necessary starting point for predicting future developments. At the same time, and with the above qualification in mind, it is necessary to continue formulating questions that pertain to the category of the “totality” of social life: restraint regarding holistic perspectives must not turn into the dogmatic rejection of the possibility that a totality of social life might exist, or emerge in conjunction with societal transformations – in some, or in decisive regards. By default, such a framework must be open-ended.

While during the twentieth century, the focus often was on refining apparatuses designed to engage in static analysis, we now need to turn our attention explicitly, directly, without excuses, to the challenge of designing a framework for dynamic analyses. As long as the social sciences are not capable of directly addressing the tension between static and dynamic analyses, they cannot do justice to the complexity and contradictory nature of the social world in the modern age. The relative relevance and irrelevance of the different disciplines



in the social sciences, therefore, must be subjected to critical analyses of ideology. In addition, however, it is necessary to admit the possibility that while economics is the most powerful social science (defining reality to a greater extent than any other discipline), sociology may be a less relevant science because of its inability to do justice to the specific requirement of analyzing the modern age: the tension between static and dynamic elements. Sociology emerged in response to the perceived need to analyze the tension between order and change; but the design of corresponding analysis appears to derive from a premodern mode of thinking that tended to conceive of social analysis in static terms: to conceive of it in dynamic terms would have violated prevailing views of thinking itself – i.e. “thinking” as a combination of practices shaped by the medieval world view and by “capitalism.”

The dynamic perspective must entail that all insights by necessity are preliminary, and must be considered and reconsidered in relation to the changing modern world. There cannot be any insights about the nature of social life independently of changing social conditions. Dialectical approaches, the closest approximations to a dynamic theory to date, remain relevant above all because they explicitly insist on the need to retain a perspective on social life that posits above all that even as we set up frameworks for analysis in relation to what is real, the latter changes, necessitating a modified perspective. According to dialectical theory, this moment must be an integral element of social analyses. All those perspectives and approaches that do not explicitly comprise a dialectical standpoint cannot, by definition, live up to the challenge of analyzing modern society in its complex and contradictory mode. On the other hand, it is clear that the dialectical perspective, however defined, at best can function only for purposes of framing, but not as an analytical approach sufficient for tackling modern society. Most of all, it only could serve as a formal perspective that highlights the need to recognize that every stage of social development (if we are to maintain a corresponding perspective, however, without attributing the necessity of qualitative advances) is the culmination of multiple conditions that coalesced at the new stage.

Many taken-for-granted assumptions about the goals of social research, and how to attain those goals, need to be reevaluated in light of one century of sociological research practice and social changes that have occurred during this period of time. Although there are incessant attempts to highlight problematic aspects of sociology, its foundations, means and objectives, this barrage of criticisms is as fragmented and multifarious as the discipline as a whole; just as most sociologists do not question the basic presuppositions of their work, the critics do not expect their arguments to receive much attention.<sup>22</sup> What sociology needs, however, is a sustained discipline-wide discourse about the

orientation and function of sociological practice in relation to social, political, cultural and economic change. Such a discourse will need to be the result of concerted and directed action across national borders, without which sociologists would be bound to replicate prevailing social patterns, such as the widespread reluctance to engage in debate about whether values and priorities are appropriate in light of the unprecedented changes that have occurred during the twentieth century.

One might argue, justifiably, that the development of a dynamic sociological theory may be such a tall order that it cannot be realized. However, the social sciences by necessity move within the field of tension between static and dynamic dimensions of social life – dimensions, moreover, that are not entirely distinct. In order to succeed in this endeavor, it is essential that frameworks be developed that are designed specifically to analyze order as well as change, since only by doing justice to the respective conditions will it be possible to approach the nature of the tension between static and dynamic dimensions.

## NOTES

1. The two most important theorists whose works were express attempts to devise a framework for analyzing the ever-changing nature of capitalist economies were Karl Marx and Joseph Schumpeter. Schumpeter's conservative outlook and mainstream orientation as an economist were counterbalanced by his willingness to concede that on this issue – the dynamic nature of capitalism – Marx's view that the bourgeoisie constantly needs to revolutionize its means of production had come closer to identifying the nature of capitalism than anyone before or after. See Schumpeter (1942), Part I; Schumpeter (1951[1949]); Bottomore (1992), pp. 28ff; Elliott (1980); see Dahms (forthcoming).

2. I owe this formulation to Claus Offe. Possible examples are the shift from liberal capitalism to corporate capitalism, from manufacturing capitalism to finance capitalism, or, in recent years, from market capitalism to network capitalism (see Castells, 1996). These shifts are not instances where one set of rules entirely replaced another; rather, one set of rules came to be supplemented with another one, which modified the initial set of rules as a consequence, without entirely replacing it. Modern capitalism typically is a "game" that consists of multiple smaller games being played at different levels of organization, and in different perimeters of social, cultural, political and geographical embeddedness according to more or less disparate rules. The decisive question following from this rules-oriented perspective is not whether there is one set of rules with which one can explain and predict all or most economic decision-making processes (which would be entirely contrary to the facts), but *whether there might be a predominant set of rules at any given point in time whose cognizance is the necessary precondition for adopting a perspective on economy, society, and the state that is positively related to the possibility of an analytical approach to studying economic situations and processes.*

3. One of the purposes of this essay is to prepare a working definition of *modern society* (although it will not be provided in this chapter). As will become apparent, this

is one of the most pivotal concepts of our age – albeit also one of the least understood; for this reason, providing a working definition at the outset *without* the necessary larger context not only would be pointless, but also would truncate the complexity of the issues at hand. Reformulating *modern society* is all the more necessary in light of the fact that the postmodernist debates in recent years, have illuminated problematic aspects of “naive” modernism, they have contributed little to the formulation of a concept of modernity that can serve as an unambiguous key concept for social-scientific research.

4. Since there are no objective criteria (independently of existing social contexts) for judging whether qualitative improvement has occurred or not, “prevailing values” is the primary (though inconsistent and contradictory) criterion. The relationship between values and change, to be sure, is rather warped and unpredictable. Change, taken on its own, does not imply any kind of positive change, progress, or betterment; rather, change merely signifies that the parameters underlying, or the perimeter relevant for, a specific situation, have undergone, as it were, quantitative or qualitative alteration. While quantitative change does not call for modified tools employed for social research, qualitative change generates new constellations that cannot be analyzed adequately on the basis of established presuppositions, categories, methods or theories. It is this kind of situation that requires a dynamic perspective.

5. See Auguste Comte’s inception of sociology as a social science (Comte, 1913–1915[1853]), and the first book published by an American with sociology in its title, Lester F. Ward’s *Dynamic Sociology* ([1883] 1968).

6. For the exemplary analysis of this kind for economics, see Schumpeter (1908). To date, there is no analysis, comparable in thrust and scope, of the underlying perspective on social processes in sociology, in terms of the static/dynamic dichotomy. At the same time, the discipline is permeated by language relating to this dichotomy. For attempts in the direction of a systematic examination of sociology, with an eye towards implicit assumptions about the relationship between order and process, see Tuma and Hannan (1984); Snook (1996); Durlauf and Young (2001). This type of study has become both more frequent and more ambitious in recent years. Mostly, writings relate to, or are inspired by, economic issues. For a critique of the static/dynamic dichotomy in sociology, see Adorno (1961). Note also that in 1945, Parsons (1954[1945], p. 214) wrote, “the functions of the frame of reference and of structural categories in their descriptive use are to state the necessary facts, and the setting for solving problems of dynamic analysis, the ultimate goal of scientific investigation.”

7. “Unifying sociological theory” is an expression I attribute (in non-derogatory fashion) to Parsons’ project of a “general theory of society,” to describe his goal of constructing a theory designed to function as a framework that makes compatible the results of empirical sociological research conducted for different purposes, within different theoretical frameworks, and with different methods. According to Parsons, such a theory ought to entail only such assumptions about concrete social life that can be presumed as valid on the basis of firm evidence (“static” elements in my terminology). “Unifying” here does not refer to a theory of social life that grasps the totality of the latter, in the sense of concrete complexity, contradictions, contingencies and exigencies. Instead, it refers to the linking of diverse research approaches, specific theories and methods in sociology, under the umbrella of a common understanding of the purpose of this discipline among the social sciences, its basic concepts, and its social import. This requires that sociologists recognize the multiplicity of approaches as endemic to a discipline whose “research object” does not have any clearly delineated boundaries. In

addition, sociologists need to acknowledge that to date there is no generally agreed upon set of criteria by which to assess the worth and adequacy of any individual approach, *independently* of the specific interest and the strategy chosen. If an approach is being judged on the basis of criteria that are not compatible with its specific interest – which still is more the rule than the exception – adequate evaluation is impossible.

8. This perspective is developed in detail in Dahms (forthcoming). Schumpeter's most pertinent work in this regard, his early masterpiece, was published in 1911. The translation is based on the work's second, revised edition (1934, 1911). See also Dahms (1995).

9. See esp. Granovetter (1985, 1990). Smelser and Swedberg concede that with "respect to *theoretical approach*, [economic sociology] is fundamentally eclectic and pluralistic and no single theoretical perspective is dominant . . . While the current pluralistic approach moves along the right lines, the bolder efforts of the classics in the area of theoretical synthesis are notably missing. Without that complementary line of theorizing, the field of economic sociology – like any area of inquiry that specializes and subspecializes – tends to sprawl. Continuing efforts to sharpen the theoretical focus of economic sociology and to work toward synthetic interpretations of its findings are essential" (pp. 18, 20). In my view, economic sociologists need to home in on the changing nature of capitalist economies, and conceive of theoretical grounding from a corresponding vantage point; for a variety of reasons, most economic sociologists have not been able to take this step, which follows logically from the subject matter they endeavor to illuminate. See the chapter on economic sociology between Marx and Weber, in Dahms (forthcoming).

10. In substance, the purpose of *Transformations* is to bring together contributions from different perspectives to a *social theory* of changes in business-labor-government relations in advanced capitalism during the twentieth century. By necessity, such a theory is preliminary, provisional, and eminently tenuous. – By contrast, the conclusions I will draw here about the future of sociology, pertain to *sociological theory* as a basis for sociology, providing this social-scientific discipline which a common ground for linking the multiplicity of research projects and approaches. Whether the formulation or construction of such a theory is possible at present, given the multifaceted nature of sociological research agendas, is not a question I dare to address here. To sketch how we might get a step closer to such a theory, however, is one purpose of this response to Herrigel's review of *Transformations*. For a more in-depth differentiation of types of theory relevant for sociology, see below, section on theoretical sociology.

11. See, e.g. Axel van den Berg's (1998) attack on "Grand Syntheses." In the same volume, see Gudmund Hernes' (1998) superb argument that as a matter of principle, theories in the social sciences should not be judged in terms of their ability to function as the basis for explaining a multiplicity of phenomena, processes, and dimensions of social life – since in most cases, their basic design is oriented toward grasping the nature of a specific, clearly delimited aspect of social reality.

12. The division of the world of economic theory in micro-economics and macro-economics is telling, in this context: there are identifiable patterns and strategies of economic rationality at the level of individual actors, households and firms, on the one hand, and at the level of national and international institutions – but *not* at the meso-level of large corporations, with changing forms of economic organization potentially functioning as the link between micro- and macro-analyses.

13. See the excellent work by Shionoya (1997); for my review of the book, see Dahms (1998a).

14. See Schumpeter (1991[1945/1946], 1975[1949]). It would be interesting to examine how Schumpeter figures into Herrigel's argument that "the unitary conception of capitalism's trajectory was opposed by (among others): catholic corporatist thinkers who believed in a fragmented social order of organic and customary communities of vocation and belief; . . ." (2000, p. 407).

15. Postmodernist discourse might be inspired by a related experience of the flawed nature of prevailing theoretical strategies in relation to societal conditions, but postmodernist proposals of more adequate strategic responses that are not aligned according to late-modernist projects (neo-Marxist critical theory, for instance, or feminism) appear to be too strongly oriented toward a kind of response to current conditions that is similarly radical as the Marxist reaction was to post-World War II corporate-capitalist society. Postmodernist strategies do not appear to allow for sufficiently rigorous empirical research, nor, concurrently, for the systematic investigation of how postmodernist proposals inadvertently express the specificity of social, political, cultural and – most of all – economic life during the *fin de vingtième siècle*.

16. Herrigel mentions this tradition on the first page of his review, with several of its representatives being introduced as representatives of the unitary tradition, in a manner that suggests that in *Transformations*, this tradition plays a central role. However, neither the tradition of Frankfurt School critical theory, nor any of its adherents in the narrow sense (aside from a cursory reference to Jürgen Habermas) are mentioned in the volume. On the other hand, there is an affinity in perspective between the overall orientation of *Transformations*, and those contributions of critical theory that pertain to the analysis of political-economic developments; in particular, note the (implicit) similarity between my argument that analysts of capitalist transformations need to pay special attention to the importance of modes of control and organization, and Marcuse's contention, in the first chapter of *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), that characteristic of technologically advanced capitalism are new forms of control that call for new modes of analysis.

17. By contrast to social theory and sociological theory, critical theory endeavors to identify existing forms of power and ideology (which social and sociological theories often reflect or perpetuate), to evaluate the relative utility of different theoretical (and methodological) approaches, as well as their shortcomings. While many social theorists apply critical categories to what methods are best suited to the study of a specific social formation, critical theorists endeavor to develop a theory facilitating the study of contemporary society without implicitly reproducing its most decisive, albeit contingent features. In this sense, critical theorists are critical both of the methods and the subject matter, and concerned with the relationship between the two.

18. Consequently, there are some continuations of Marxian social theory in which the dynamic component is quite conspicuous, as in world systems theory, and others that are manifestly anti-dynamic, as in the various versions of "traditional Marxism" critically analyzed by Moishe Postone (1993).

19. For the detailed extraction of this working definition of the formal core of critical theory in relation to non-critical theories, see the chapter on dynamic sociology, the tensions of the modern age, and critical theory, in Dahms (forthcoming).

20. For an excellent illustration of the many blind spots in the current practice of sociology, see Eichler (1998), especially the section on "The Invisibility of the Unsustainability of our Current Societal Organization" (pp. 14ff).

21. Dialectical perspectives on modern society, developed since Hegel's philosophy in the early 19th century, and brought to first heights by Karl Marx, are the

closest approximation to a dynamic theory of modern society to date. The main difference between dialectical and dynamic perspectives is that the former assumes an empirically relevant, and identifiable teleological movement in history, while the latter treat interest in the trajectory of change in history as a necessary precondition for analyzing the conditions of life in the modern world, however, without asserting that there is necessarily any kind of underlying meaning to concrete patterns of change. Yet if there are patterns that can be understood, they might engender a perspective on the near future that may enable social scientists to thematize unprecedented opportunities for solving social problems and for improving conditions of life on Earth that otherwise might be overlooked.

22. For a most instructive overview in this regard, see Camic and Gross (1998).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In a recent article, Gary Herigel (2000) reviewed the collection of contributions by political economists and economic sociologists I edited, *Transformations of Capitalism: Economy, Society, and the State in Modern Times* (Dahms, 2000). I took this opportunity to restate the purpose of the volume and the rationale for the contributions included, and to expand on implications of the resulting perspective on capitalism under conditions of globalization, for the future of theoretical sociology. I presented earlier versions of the central thesis of this article in the Research Colloquiums of the Institute of Social Sciences, Humboldt University, Berlin (December 7, 1999); the Center for European and North American Studies, Georg August University, Göttingen (February 9, 2000); and the Department of Sociology at Florida State University (April 7, 2000).

## REFERENCES

- Adorno, Th. W. (1961). 'Static' and 'Dynamic' as Sociological Categories. *Diogenes*, 33, 28–49.
- Albert, M. (1993). *Capitalism vs. Capitalism. How America's Obsession with Individual Achievement and Short-term Profit has Led It to the Brink of Collapse*. New York: Four Wall Eight Windows.
- Boron, A. (1999). A Social Theory for the 21st Century? *Current Sociology*, 47(4), 47–64.
- Bottomore, T. (1992). *Between Marginalism and Marxism: The Economic Sociology of J. A. Schumpeter*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Camic, C., & Gross, N. (1998). Contemporary Developments in Sociological Theory: Current Projects and Conditions of Possibility. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, 453–476.
- Castells, M. (1996). *The Rise of the Network Society. Vol. I of The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.
- Comte, A. (1913–1915[1853]). *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*. Trans. & condensed by H. Martineau, with an introduction by F. Harrison. London: G. Bell.
- Dahms, H. F. (1995). From Creative Action to the Social Rationalization of the Economy: Joseph A. Schumpeter's Social Theory. *Sociological Theory*, 13(1), 1–13.

- Dahms, H. F. (1997). Theory in Weberian Marxism: Patterns of Critical Social Theory in Lukács and Habermas. *Sociological Theory*, 15(3), 181–214.
- Dahms, H. F. (1998). Beyond the Carousel of Reification: Critical Social Theory After Lukács, Adorno and Habermas. *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, 18, 3–62.
- Dahms, H. F. (1998a). Review of Yuichi Shionoya, Schumpeter and the idea of social science. *Journal of Evolutionary Economics*, 8(3), 322–327.
- Dahms, H. F. (Ed.) (2000). *Transformations of Capitalism: Economy, Society, and the State in Modern Times*. New York: New York University Press.
- Dahms, H. F. (forthcoming). *A Dynamic Theory of Modern Capitalism: Schumpeter's Economic Sociology of Entrepreneurship*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deutschmann, C. (1999). *Die Verheißung des absoluten Reichtums. Zur religiösen Natur des Kapitalismus*. Frankfurt: Campus.
- Durlauf, S. N., & Young, H. P. (Eds) (2001). *Social Dynamics*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press.
- Eichler, M. (1998). Making Sociology More Inclusive. *Current Sociology*, 46(2), 5–28.
- Elliott, J. E. (1980). Marx and Schumpeter on capitalism's creative destruction: A comparative restatement. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 95(1), 45–86.
- Gomes-Casseres, B. (1996). *The Alliance Revolution. The New Shape of Business Rivalry*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Granovetter, M. (1985). Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology*, 91, 481–510.
- Granovetter, M. (1990). The Old and the New Economic Sociology: A History and an Agenda. In: R. Friedland & A. F. Robertson (Eds), *Beyond the Marketplace. Rethinking Economy and Society* (pp. 89–112). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Hanusch, H. (Ed.) (1988). *Evolutionary Economics. Applications of Schumpeter's Ideas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harrison, B. (1997[1994]). *Lean and Mean. The Changing Landscape of Corporate Power in the Age of Flexibility*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Hernes, G. (1998). Real Virtuality. In: P. Hedström & R. Swedberg (Eds), *Social Mechanisms*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Herrigel, G. (2000). Social Theory and the Transformation of Capitalism in the Twentieth Century. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 13(3), 404–426.
- Hickson, D. J. (Ed.) (1993). *Management in Western Europe. Society, Culture and Organization in 12 Nations*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Horkheimer, M. (1986[1937]). Traditional and Critical Theory. In: M. J. O'Connell et al. (Trans.), *Critical Theory. Selected Essays* (pp. 188–243). New York: Continuum.
- Keynes, J. M. (2000[1926]). The End of Laissez-faire. In: Dahms (pp. 101–120).
- Marcuse, H. (1964). *One-Dimensional Man. Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Massey, D. (1999). Negotiating Disciplinary Boundaries. *Current Sociology*, 47(4), 5–12.
- Mouzelis, N. (1995). *Sociological Theory: What went wrong? Diagnoses and Remedies*. London: Routledge.
- Nelson, D. (Ed.) (1992). *A Mental Revolution. Scientific Management Since Taylor*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Parsons, T. (1951). *The Social System*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Postone, M. (1993). *Time, Labor, and Social Domination. A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Postone, M. (1999). Contemporary Historical Transformations: Beyond Postindustrial Theory and Neo-Marxism. *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, 19, 3–53.

- Schumpeter, J. A. (1908). *Das Wesen und der Hauptinhalt der theoretischen Nationalökonomie*. Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot.
- Schumpeter, J. A. (1942). *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. New York: Harper and Brothers.
- Schumpeter, J. A. (1991[1945/1946]). The Future of Private Enterprise in the Face of Modern Socialist Tendencies. In: R. Swedberg (Ed.), *The Economics and Sociology of Capitalism* (pp. 401–405). Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Schumpeter, J. A. (1951[1949]). The Communist Manifesto in Sociology and Economics. In: R. V. Clemence (Eds), *Essays* (pp. 286–287). Cambridge, MA: Addison Wesley Press.
- Schumpeter, J. A. (1975[1949]). The March into Socialism. In: *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (pp. 412–425). New York: Harper.
- Shionoya, Y. (1997). *Schumpeter and the idea of social science*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Smelser, N., & Swedberg, R. (Eds) (1994). *The Handbook of Economic Sociology*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Snooks, G. D. (1996). *The dynamic society: exploring the sources of global change*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Thurow, L. (1992). *Head to Head. The Coming Economic Battle Among Japan, Europe, and America*. New York: Warner Books.
- Tuma, N. B., & Hannan, M. T. (1984). *Social dynamics: models and methods*. Orlando: Academic Press.
- van den Berg, A. (1998). Is Sociological theory too grand for social mechanisms? In: P. Hedström & R. Swedberg (Eds), *Social Mechanisms*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ward, L. F. (1968[1883]). *Dynamic Sociology, or Applied Social Science, as Based Upon Statistical Sociology and the Less Complex Sciences*, Vol. 2. New York: Greenwood Press.